Sport, Social Class and the Inter-war BBC 1922-39:

A Study of Reithian Employment Policies through the Social Theory of Pierre Bourdieu

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Abstract

This thesis explores the history of BBC radio sport from the founding of the monopoly broadcasting company in 1922 to the end of 1939 from the perspective of social class. The sociological thought of Pierre Bourdieu is applied as a tool of analysis throughout. The work first uncovers a Reithian system of staff recruitment based on the possession by individuals of accumulated social and cultural capital, principally via attendance at public schools and Oxford or Cambridge universities. Then, via a rigorous investigation of personal biographies, archival documents held at the BBC Written and Sound Archive, staff memoirs, *Radio Times* articles and programme notes, the thesis demonstrates the extended nature of this system in the realm of BBC radio sports output at both national and regional levels. As it traces its path through the 1920s and 1930s in a study of continuity and change, it finds that only minor alterations were made to the system by the outbreak of the Second World War. The inclusion of a case study of the first live sports running commentary in January 1927 points up the definitively elitist social processes at work in constructing BBC sports programming.

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I'd like to thank Dr. Carol Beardmore and Professor Siobhan Keenan at DMU, Katie Ankers and Els Boonen at the BBC Written Archive Centre at Emmer Green, Tony Collins for his constant encouragement and Louise Thomas, who knows exactly what she did, when she did it and how important it was.

Historian of Sport, Richard Holt told me, when I moaned about getting (deservedly) pretty mediocre marks for my MA dissertation, "it's not about the marks; it's about doing interesting work." I hope this thesis lives up to his dictum.

Explanatory Comment

Where output data is quoted for BBC sport in the thesis (e.g., "260 broadcast sport items in 1932, news reports and short bulletins excluded"), all statistics are taken from the author's own database of sports output, 1922-39. This was compiled 2014-20 using daily programme listings in *The Times, Radio Times* and the BBC's Programmes as Broadcast books held at the Written Archive Centre in Berkshire.

List of Abbreviations

BA	Batchelor of Arts degree
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation, 1927--
BBCo	British Broadcasting Company, 1922-26
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
EBA	England Bowls Association
EWA	Eye-witness account
FC	Football Club
GEC	General Electric Company
JP	Justice of the Peace
ITMA	*It's That Man Again*, late-1930s comedy programme
ITT	*In Town Tonight*, popular Saturday evening programme from 1933
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
LTC	Lawn tennis club
MA	Master of Arts degree
MC	Military Cross
MCC	Marylebone Cricket Club (governing body of English and world cricket)
NPA	Newspaper Proprietors Association
OB	Outside Broadcast
PasBs	Programmes as Broadcast record books
PE	Physical Education
PRO	Public Relations Officer
PT	Physical Training
RCont	WAC file of contributor to BBC broadcasts as oppose to a member of staff.
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RP	Received Pronunciation
RT	*Radio Times*
SA	BBC Sound Archive
SIN	Sport in News (sports items attached to daily evening news bulletins)
VC	Victoria Cross
WAC	BBC's Written Archive Centre at Caversham, Berkshire
WBA	West Bromwich Albion
YHA	Youth Hostelling Association
2LO	Shorthand name for BBCo/BBC's National station, operating from London

Introduction

> "'Next to the House of Commons,' one of the first radio critics has reminisced, 'Savoy Hill was quite the most pleasant club in London. There were coal fires, and visitors were welcomed by a most distinguished looking gentleman who would conduct them to a cosy private room and offer whisky-and-soda. And you could always be certain of running into great men like H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, G. K. Chesterton or Hilaire Belloc.'"[1] Gail Pendrick

> A field is "endowed with its own specific rewards and its own rules"[2] Pierre Bourdieu

The Inter-War BBC: a Suitable Site for Class Analysis

The first quotation above, deployed by the BBC's official biographer Asa Briggs, illustrates something of great importance: that the BBC from its inception was, in its culture and practices, a product of Britain's dominant class within a class system which systematically produced and reproduced social inequality. Pendrick's depiction is a piece of social anthropology that takes us to the heart of the inter-war BBC in both literal and symbolic terms. This room at the BBC's London West-End headquarters is a reconstruction of a dominant class home, doubtless on a smaller scale, and is designed to make guest broadcasters feel 'at home'. In it there are recognisable examples of what French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu theorized as "habitus", dispositions of a social class, in this case lifestyle, particularly the whisky and soda and the "distinguished looking gentleman." Pendrick also presents it as a gentleman's club, an institutional emblem of the dominant class. The quote describes not just the social politics of inclusion but also of exclusion, completing an

[1] Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Volume I, The Birth of Broadcasting* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 211, Gale Pendrick, BBC programme, "*These Radio Times*," December 18, 1953. It is not clear whether the source is a radio, as opposed to a radio broadcast.
[2] Pierre Bourdieu, "Sport and Social Class," *Social Science Information*, 17, no. 6 (December 1978), 821.

essential binary relationship of class. Inscribed in the scene is not just an intimation of who is invited to the room but who is not. In Bourdieusian theory, the operation of such social spaces or universes, "fields", are aimed to induce the typical response, "this is not for the likes of us" from the excluded, thus reinforcing the exclusion process.[3] Research carried out for this project into the inter-war BBC's character, culture and policy via a study of recruitment (as a whole), a study of sports output (via a typology of the class nature of sport) and sports mediator selection, reveals that the excluded from the 'welcome' drawing room were the classes situated below the dominant class: the working class and the petite bourgeoisie.[4] Though there was a slight softening of approach from the mid-1930s, the field constituted by both BBCs – the British Broadcasting Company from 1922-26 and the British Broadcasting Corporation from 1927 to the present - was a social universe where the 'game' – again to use a common Bourdieusian theoretical construction – whose rules were fixed by the dominant class and where an entry ticket could only be gained by possession of two forms of symbolic capital: social and cultural. This in turn could only be gained through its inheritance as an "heirloom" via the family, manifesting particularly through attendance of certain types of educational establishment or an upward movement of individual or family social trajectory such as success in the arts or commerce.[5] The stakes of the game were power, authority and status. The early BBC is often depicted as a creation of John Reith (first general manager, then managing director, then Director-General), but it was actually a socially constructed institution where power truly lay with dominant class institutions constituting fields within the meta-field of the state: Parliament and the authority of its legislation and charters, the government of the day (and its designated broadcasting minister,

[3] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984), 480.
[4] "Petty bourgeoisie" is an English translation of "petite bourgeoisie" and used in the thesis for linguistic simplicity. The petite bourgeoisie refers to the lower middle-class fraction, sitting just above the top fraction of the working class. This lowest middle-class fraction resides well below the higher middle-class fraction which Bourdieu categorised as "dominant class."
[5] Popular arts included. Charlie Chaplin would be a good example here as would Noel Coward; outside Britain, Georges Simenon. Both moved in 'society' circles, took on aspects of dominant class habitus, in Chaplin's case, in the USA.

the Postmaster General) the BBC Governors and, initially, the government instituted broadcasting committee of wireless manufacturers. Of key importance is the fact that all these checks on Reith's power were socially constituted, operating as functions of British class relations.

This thesis continues to offer a different way of understanding the inter-war BBC by using recruitment practices as a key prism. It does so by closely examining this in two strands: firstly, its recruitment of staff above non-menial, technical and low skill level, and secondly, its recruitment of sports mediators. To do this it also takes the fairly unusual approach of incorporating a sociological approach into the more common epistemological practices of historians. For the first time the history of BBC sport is examined explicitly in terms of social class. This is also the first study of the BBC that uses sport specifically as a route to understanding the institution as a whole. The thesis firmly contends that in trying to understand the essential nature of the Reithian BBC, from which its practices, ethos and tendencies sprang, a study of its mediators of sports output functions effectively.[6]

The fields under analysis are two in number: the field of the employment at the BBC and the field of its sports mediators, 1922-39. The first aim of the analysis is to uncover the extent to which social class relations influenced entry to both fields. This has been successful, enabling a better definition of the character of the institution through new knowledge of its staff recruitment practices. This has been achieved through synthesising evidence from a range of sources (see below). A second aim is to uncover the extent to which class influenced the

[6] It is difficult here to choose between "character", "nature" and "essence". Each would suffice.

selection of individuals for mediating sports output.[7] This exercise has produced results which confirm the findings of the initial inquiry into the class of the staff per se, showing that class was at the centre of sports mediator recruitment also. These results clarify and define further the nature of the BBC in its first two decades.

The BBC's practices of social production and reproduction directly reflected an understanding of class between the two World Wars that was very widely apprehended. "England," wrote George Orwell in 1940 "is the most class-ridden country under the sun."[8] David Cannadine, citing the historian Richard 'Harry' Tawney from 1931 noted, "The British saw their society as 'a hierarchical social order', which was 'so venerable and all-pervading, so hallowed by tradition and permeated with pious emotion' that 'it seems inconceivable to its adherents that any other system should exist', and that until attention is called to it by the irreverent curiosity of strangers, they are not even conscious of the facts of its existence.'"[9] Later historians can hardly disagree with Dan LeMahieu's comment that "By the outbreak of the Second World War, Britain was still a nation profoundly divided by class."[10] And yet Ross McKibbin sounded a warning to scholars in 1998, stating that "We tend to overlook just how intense class-consciousness was, especially among the middle-class, in the years after the First World War."[11] One further intention of this thesis is to be alert to that problem.

Broadcasting is a highly suitable medium for studying inter-war class in Britain. And sport is also admirably suited as a site within a broadcaster such as the BBC for understanding the play and inter-play of class within both. Though by no means all historians of sport treat class

[7] BBC television output, which began in 1936 and which from the beginning included sport, is not the subject of the analysis in this research project.
[8] George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (London: Penguin, 1982**),** 52.
[9] Richard "Harry" Tawney, *Equality* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931), 9, cited in David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Penguin, 1998), 143.
[10] Dan LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy, Mass Communication and the Cultured Mind Between the Wars* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 4.
[11] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures, England 1918-51* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 529.

as a highly important tool of analysis, the work of a number of them over the past four decades or so has convincingly interpreted sport as a political and social product rather than existing in a vacuum free of external influences. Individual sports and sport per se can be analysed as a phenomenon, a distinct aspect of human existence, which have been created and developed by social actors, their actions shaped by the nature of the societies within which they acted. Further, as historians such as Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, Richard Holt, John Lowerson and Tony Collins have amply demonstrated, the work of these actors has been influenced in direct and profound ways by the social class in which they can be categorized.[12] So intensely symbiotic is the relationship between sports, their founders, administrators and players and their social class that it can be said almost indisputably that sports such as rugby union, rugby league, Association football, rowing, lawn tennis and horse racing were created by specific social classes at least as much as they were shaped by individuals with a social class attachment. To give three examples, rugby union's existence is owed in large part to a convulsion in the world of industrial production from around 1770 which gave birth to a new, rich industrial, capitalist class.[13] This engineered a reformed public school system in which sports, including different forms of football, formed an essential part of the education of the young boy. The existence of rugby league owes more to the working class in the north of England taking up a gentlemanly sport with sufficient enthusiasm to threaten the sport's upper middle-class southern leaders due to the adoption of practices specific to the development of industrial capitalism – professionalism.[14] Thirdly, the growth of spectator sport was to a large extent the result of changing power relations between the working class and the industrial bourgeoisie in the third quarter of the nineteenth century,

[12] Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979); Richard Holt, *Sport and the British* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989); John Lowerson, Sport *and the English middle classes 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Tony Collins, *A Social History of English Rugby Union* (London: Routledge, 2009); Tony Collins, *Sport in Capitalist Society* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
[13] Karl Marx, *Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 375-77.
[14] See Tony Collins, *Rugby's Great Split: Class, Culture and the Origins of Rugby League Football* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 130-43.

causing the creation of a half-day leisure space on Saturday afternoons. Cricket – at Test and County levels – is impossible to understand without the same cognisance of the complex development of British social classes in the nineteenth century, a process which began through the interaction of two social classes – gentlemen and labourers - in the eighteenth century.

In April 1923, a monopoly radio broadcaster, the British Broadcasting Company, began to create sports output. Like the nation's sports, this was a product of class relations and the recent history of class in Britain, which defined the nation's politics and which in turn defined its own specific products: the government of the day and all decisions that flowed from it. As this thesis will argue, the creation of the BBCo was one such product, with *its* products, its cohort of mediators included, shaped and defined by class relations. As noted by Wacquant, "The task of sociology, according to Bourdieu, is 'to uncover the most profoundly buried structures of the various social worlds which constitute the social universe.'"[15] The thrust of much of this thesis stems from this proposition. For at no time in the inter-war period was the existence of Britain's class inequality freely disclosed by the dominant classes. John Reith, one of the most important dominant class members of the period, for example, presented the work of the BBCo, from an early stage, as "democratic". A purpose of the thesis is to test the BBC's view of itself and its recruitment practices and their outcome. As the BBC grew in national significance – and the trajectory of its advance was steep – the more it felt compelled to justify its purpose and its work. In terms of reflexivity, the sources suggest that this was very poor, partly a function of the defensiveness of its de facto leader, Reith.[16]

[15] Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Polity Press, 1997), 7.
[16] See for example, John Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 172-3, for a typical example of outside pressure and a Reithian response.

To better understand the BBC and in turn any aspect of its inter-war history, a job of uncovering is required. As will be shown in Chapter One, this entails demonstrating that the nation state's institutions, its elected executive governments, the broadcasting committee of wireless manufacturers and the monopoly BBCo were all socially constituted and aligned directly and continuously. It flows directly from this that the selection of the first BBC general manager, the appointment of a board of governors and the selection of policies, programme types and styles and staff, would be socially constituted products and acts also. The concern of this thesis is to explicate the implications of this in terms of its sports product, in turn reflecting light back upon the class-bound nature of the wider organisation. This will be accomplished by examining the effect of its social class-bound practices on one single aspect of its production and execution of sports programming, its mediators. Such individuals were givers of talks, commentators, eye-witness reporters, hosts of magazine programmes and regular features (previews and reviews of events), those giving speeches at receptions in selected outside broadcasts and in one single instance, the presenters of an evening entertainment show devoted to sport. The mediator is not the only type of BBC employee or freelancer investigated in this thesis. A number of administrators and producers are included in the cohort, those individuals responsible for sports output production who directly shaped its tone and substance. John Reith, a keen sports enthusiast before middle-age, is included here as the most important BBC employee of the whole period.[17]

To understand mediator recruitment, however, it is essential to understand Reithian staff recruitment practices per se. Until 1938, Reith was the chief executive officer of both BBCs and was given full responsibility for staffing at all levels of the organisation, free of direct

[17] Reith wore a rugby shirt in the trenches during the Great War and is on record as playing rugby union, lawn tennis, table tennis, swam, dove and played baseball (in the USA). See BBC Written Archive Centre (hereafter 'WAC'), WAC S60/5/1/2; WAC S60/5/1/3, both Reith Diary Research Version.

interference. As Chapter One will explain, he developed a personal system of recruitment based largely, but not completely, on his own conception of suitability. This was deeply ingrained with an ideology of social class which was almost universally shared by Reith's fellow products of the British public school system. At its centre was the belief in a 'natural' superiority-inferiority model of the upper- and upper middle-class male, the 'English gentleman', vis-á-vis the male of the 'lower classes'. Such labels as 'educated' or 'governing' classes are not of particular concern to Bourdieu or his conceptualisations of class. Reith clearly was a member of a Britain's dominant class. Imbued with or at least familiar with the conservative tenets of its *Weltanschauung*, his staff built the programmes of which the BBC was ultimately made. But as shall be explained more fully in Chapter One, Reith's dominant class ideology bore strong elements of the modern bourgeois, incorporating a belief in the virtues of the practical achiever into an essential elitism which bore some of the hallmarks of the nineteenth century socially privileged: a reverence for monarchy, a dislike of many aspects of social modernity and enthusiasm for the established social order and its ancient institutions.

Carrying out this analysis and explaining its results closes a significant gap in academic knowledge of the BBC's character, tone and substance. This work utilises the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu as an essential tool. Using his field theory it exposes the BBC as a social space where staff were only able to gain access through being able to demonstrate their possession of a precise type of social and cultural symbolic capital to Reith. To do this, applicants were required to display the correct habitus, a set of attitudes, practices and dispositions. As Bourdieu put it,

> The schemes of the habitus...orienting practices...embed what some would mistakenly call values in the most automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant

> techniques of the body — ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating or talking — and engage the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world...[18]

This thesis will argue that capital and habitus possession and display were the keys of entry to the staff of the organisation. It will argue in Chapters Two and Four that in turn, to a very large extent these same keys gained entry to mediation of sports output. Chapter Three consists of a case study which places this Reith System and its concomitant practices under closer inspection as they stood in January 1927. Thus, BBC radio sport was formed or constructed according to British class ideological notions and beliefs as these stood in a post-war country still in a state of flux and uncertainty. The BBC was born into and made a part of a society still led by a dominant class trying to hold fast late-Victorian and Edwardian certainties such as its own God-given right to govern the country despite the grievous loss of many of its young males to war. It also had to content with infiltration to its upper ranks by a rising bourgeois class fraction below them, encouraged by David Lloyd-George, Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922. Simultaneously, a self-identifying middle class was trying to assert its right to a keenly felt superiority over a restless working class below them. The *classes populaires* was itself soon struggling to maintain rising real wages won during the conflict when the post-war boom ended in 1920. It remained to be seen to what extent firstly how unstable the British social system would prove to be as it moved away from war, and secondly, how the BBC would accommodate itself to whatever social or indeed political changes might take place.

[18] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 468.

A Brief Introduction to the Social Theory of Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) was a French philosopher whose shifts to cultural anthropology, then to sociology saw him become one of the most influential social theorists of the late-twentieth century. According to Reuters, in 2012 he was the second most quoted behind Michel Foucault but ahead of Jacques Derrida.[19]

His academic career has produced a considerable number of encomiums across a steadily increasing volume of literature. "Bourdieu is now regarded as one of the foremost social philosophers of the Twentieth Century," according to Michael Grenfell;[20] for Michael Burawoy and Karl Van Holdt, "the most influential sociologist of our time,"[21] who has, notes Deborah Read-Danhay, "...had an enormous influence on social and cultural thought in the second half of the 20th century..."[22] One of the chief attractions of Bourdieu's work is that it a "unified political economy of practice" which opens up the possibility of a profound understanding of how underlying, unconscious social structures manufacture the fabric of everyday life.[23] His work is also hugely impressive in its breadth.[24] His multi-disciplinary influence has not abated. It is not possible in this space to summarise his career, its range, scope and impact adequately but it is hoped that his most essential ideas will be outlined sufficiently sharply that they clearly illustrate his importance in understanding the inter-war BBC. These centre on his field theory, originated and developed in the early-seventies and its

[19] Nicholas Truoy and Nicholas Weill, "A Decade After his Death, Pierre Bourdieu Stands Tall," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2012, originally published in *Le Monde*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/21/pierre-bourdieu-philosophy-most-quoted. The article is a useful gauge of Bourdieu's academic importance.
[20] Michael J. Grenfell, *Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1.
[21] Michael Burawoy and Karl Van Holdt, *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment* (Johannesburg: Wits University, 2012), online abstract, http://witspress.co.za/catalogue/conversations-with-bourdieu/.
[22] Deborah Read-Danahay, *Locating Bourdieu* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), abstract.
[23] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 4.
[24] Tim Barrett, "Storying Bourdieu: Towards a Bourdieusian Approach to Life Studies," *International Journal of Quantitative Methods,* 1, no.10 (December 2005), 1.

attendant hypothesisations of capital, habitus and doxa, which together form a coherent explanation of how the extraordinarily pervasive dominant class power and the profits it provides is maintained via calculated policies of inclusion and exclusion of those who do not belong.[25] Because his social physics depicts with utter conviction a social planet ubiquitously producing social inequality he was "...a public intellectual of the Left..."[26] However, he rejected key strands of Orthodox Marxist thought, seeing its totalising view of history and politics as a faulty depiction of social reality, exemplifying how arid solely theoretical explanations could be. Equally, he rejected structural-functionalism, closely associated with the opposite political polarity, including the USA giant of post-Second World War sociology, Talcott Parsons.

By developing his field theory he was able to reveal the machinery of the social power of elites. In each field there tended to exist a "dominant class" in the struggle for power within groups and individuals. The verb he universally used to described the action of this class was "dominate"; those excluded from power were grouped and defined simply as the "dominated". The repetitious diction was a deliberately deployed feature of his writing.[27] In the capitalist societies he analysed, his lexicon of class included mainstream terms such as "bourgeoisie", "aristocracy", "middle class", "upper middle class", "petty bourgeoisie" and "working class". But he was not concerned with debates concerning the grey areas between classes, between the uppermost "fraction" (a common Bourdieusian term) of the working class and the lowest fraction of the petty bourgeoisie, for example. These he regarded as largely irrelevant to the central issues of the dynamics of power. His thought placed him

[25] Derek Robins, *Bourdieu and Culture* (London: Sage, 2000), 15-16.
[26] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 118; Simon Susen and Bryan S. Turner, eds., Bourdieu: Critical Essays (London: Anthem, 2011), xix.
[27] See for example, Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 24.

between two opposing sociologies, subjectivism and objectivism,[28] between social anthropology, which described but under-theorised, and sociologists obsessed with theory and insufficiently interested in recognising the "nitty-gritty" of everyday life.[29] He referred to his approach as "structuralist constructivism" though he is often labelled as a post-structuralist or post-modernist.[30] He indefatigably pursued a teaching of sociology that presented human existence as being socially constructed, insisting that it could only be understood in those terms. Stripping the labels away, he relentlessly pursued a search for a "realistic vision of the social world."[31]

Believing implacably that human existence can only be understood through a conception of life being socially determined - not only socially constructed but pre-constructed and replicated over and through time – one of his goals was to reveal "the 'mechanisms' that tend to ensure [the] production and reproduction" of power relations that governed that existence.[32] His identification of the "pre-constructed" nature of the societal structures and the mechanisms of class inequality that determine everyday life is of exceptional importance. "*The preconstructed is everywhere,*" he wrote.[33] Human experience is society-bound and shaped; pre-determined, pre-constructed. He stressed the importance of the sociologist understanding this, that "she is a social being, that she is therefore socialized and led to feel 'like a fish in water' within that social world whose structures she has internalized."[34] This system for Bourdieu was intentional in stabilising the hegemonic power of the dominant

[28] James Albright and Deborah Hartmann, "Introduction: On Doing Field Analysis," in James Albright, Deborah Hartmann and Jacqueline Widin, eds., *Bourdieu's Field Theory and The Social Sciences* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2; Barrett, *Storying Bourdieu*, 1.
[29] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 198.
[30] Michael Grenfell, "Bourdieu and Initial Teacher Education," *British Educational Research Journal*, 22, no. 3 (June 1996), 287-8.
[31] Bourdieu & Wacquant, ibid., 155.
[32] Diane Reay, "It's all becoming a habitus, beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research," *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25, no.4 (September 2004), 431.
[33] Bourdieu & Wacquant, ibid., 235.
[34] Ibid.

class. His ability to produce a coherent explanation of both how elites maintained and reproduced their power over those below them in the class pyramid, whilst using both the theoretical approach of objective sociology and the primacy of empirical observation in subjective sociology, does much to explain his importance.

The attraction of Bourdieu in this project is partly one of the individual researcher being drawn towards a negative perception of class inequality that reinforces a perception they themselves have long accepted (Bourdieu stressed the importance of the sociology of the sociologist – in this case rather more the historian utilising social theory to better understand the past – so that the tendency of their own personal dispositions to distort their practice and their conclusions is recognised and taken account of). But much more important is the clarity of Bourdieu's thought, aims, methods – theoretical yet deeply empirical – and findings, but above all it is the intellectual power of his conclusions, the force of its rationality that convinces. This thesis is a test of this personal viewpoint.

Historiography of the BBC and Social Class 1922-39

The literature on the history of the BBC is fairly plentiful, especially as it has attracted academic research across a range of disciplines. However, there is a relatively small amount of material on the inter-war organisation, either specifically or within larger studies, especially in the past decade. This thesis addresses the concern that the existing body of broadcasting literature does not present the BBC as a socially constituted institution, where the absence of this perspective has a limiting effect upon attempts to understand its purposes, practices, effects and influences. Complete refusal of the subject of class is not unknown by serious scholars of broadcasting who have produced valuable volumes on the institution.[35] As

[35] See for example, Richard Haynes, *Sport in Black and White* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016); Charlotte Higgins, *This new noise: the extraordinary birth and troubled life of the BBC* (London: Faber, 2014); Thomas Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society, 1918-39* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983); James Curran and

a result there has also been an absence of debate about its class character and its purpose in class terms, consciously or otherwise. Raymond Williams is one exception. He pointed out that public service broadcasting, before the Second World War, a synonym for 'the BBC', directly reflected a pre-existing "ruling class...definition of the national culture."[36] Another is Seán Street, whose essentially inter-war BBC study has class as one its main concerns.[37] Awareness of the nexus between the BBC and social class is unusual even among lengthy and in-depth works of scholarship on the institution. It is often notionally acknowledged in analyses of various kinds on the organisation but no more. Briggs' first two volumes of official biography serve as a useful exemplar of this tendency. Indeed, Briggs scarcely recognises the place of class relations in his narrative. His view that the culture of the BBC announcer was based on "...an image drawn from upper-class or upper middle-class life" was descriptive rather than analytical. However, his comment that "The BBC, by the nature of its social context, never found it easy fully to penetrate the working-class world which provided it with by far the largest part of its audience…" is a rather more useful view, even if it somewhat understates the vast distance between the dominant class staff and the working class. [38] It also undercuts his statement that British society was "bitterly divided."[39] But his note that in inter-war Britain "social controls were always in the hands of 'privilege' of one kind or another" helps set up a platform for this thesis. It will be asked to what extent the BBC represented privilege and if this was the case, how was this made manifest? And going further, it will be asked, did radio sport's phalanx of mediators reflect this or undermine patterns of social privilege in inter-war Britain?

Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility, The Press and Broadcasting in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1981); Burton Paulu, *British Broadcasting in Transition* (London: Macmillan, 1961).

[36] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974), 32.

[37] Seán Street, *Crossing the Ether: Public Service Radio and Commercial Competition in Britain with special reference to Pre-War Broadcasting* (Eastleigh: John Libby, 2006).

[38] Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume II, The Golden Age of Wireless* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 40.

[39] Ibid. For class divided Britain, see Richard Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957).

Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, authors of a key text on the early BBC to rank with Briggs according to Purcell,[40] referenced social class in their prolonged and detailed review of broadcasting up to the Second World War, describing it as a middle-class institution, but they have not applied the perspective of class relations to their subject.[41] While recognising "social" aspects of the material in terms of issues such as policies, strategies, programme building and audiences, and noting that the BBC's position was supportive of the existing social order, they eschew using the tools of the sociologist to aid their enquiries. The informal discussion held by Scannell and Cardiff and others on Reith's intention to forge a 'democratic' medium with an intent to create 'national unity' and a 'general public' as part of an inquiry into the concept of public service broadcasting might have used the sociology of class to enable them to consider a different perspective on an intriguing issue.[42] Adducing the hypothesis that these objectives may have been undertaken in the interests of the class or classes who might profit from a state divided by nationality, gender and class in terms of power, status and wealth would have advanced the debate.

In their chapter, 'Broadcasting and Unemployment', Scannell and Cardiff try to reclaim the BBC as an organisation unafraid to take on the 'political' aspect of the exceptionally pressing national concerns of the early thirties, a charge previously sustained against it by the historians Briggs, Tom Burns and Kristian Kumar.[43] Whatever the merits of the arguments on either side, Scannell and Cardiff's refusal to use class as an analytical aid creates a deficit in

[40] Jennifer Purcell, "Enthusiasm, Experimentation and Gallantry, Developing Light Entertainment on the Fledgling BBC 1922-32," *Cultural and Social History*, 15, no. 3 (June 2018), 416.
[41] Paul Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume One, 1922-39, Serving the Nation* (London: Blackwell, 1991), 176.
[42] Ibid., 8-14; Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 238-40.
[43] See for example, Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting* and *Golden Age of Wireless*, Tom Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World* (London: Macmillan, 1977); Kristian Kumar, *"*Holding the Middle Ground: The BBC, The Public and the Professional Broadcaster*,"* *Sociology*, 90, no.1 (January 1975), 67-88.

the debate.[44] A class relational approach allows an understanding of a dominant class BBC staff in this period wrestling with the problem of having to face both ways at once: trying to fulfil its role of "neutral" provider of information as a national monopoly broadcaster whilst fulfilling its partly unconscious requirement to maintain the domination by the dominant class of the dominated: the classes below them in a hierarchical structure of class inequality. Thus far, no work of BBC history has used class as an aid using sociological theory. This thesis is an attempt to discover just how useful class analysis can be is as a tool in bringing the historian to a position where, as was the aim of Bourdieu's sociology, to see things as they truly are, to better apprehend the BBC's character, practices and intentions between its founding and the Second World War.

Scholars have frequently used the language of class to describe the broadcaster in this period. This sub-textually accepts class in a theoretical sense but their use of class conceptually does not extend much beyond this acceptance. For example, Dan LeMahieu states that the BBC addressed "...the concerns and tastes of the "educated middle classes" rather than a truly national audience. He also notes its "middle-class social values." A. J. P. Taylor notes its "middle-class paternalism," Keith Middlemas sees its values as being "derived from the prosperous middle-class culture of the inter-war years" and James Curran and Jean Seaton acknowledge its "middle-class producers."[45] Catherine Murphy cites the editor of *The Listener*'s view that in the 1930s the staff were "too middle-class to welcome trade union notions" and Street has pointed out that its programming was "biased towards middle and

[44] The word "refusal" is in this thesis used in the Bourdieusian sense where he suggests to whatever extent, social actors, in this case historians, have or have had the opportunity to recognise a particular choice of thought, position or action but have not done so.
[45] LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, 180; A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-45* (London: Penguin, 1967), 299; J. Curran and J. Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, 147; Keith Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society* (London: André Deutsch, 1989), 366.

upper class taste..."[46] This latter categorization is rare although Arthur Marwick has suggested, rather intemperately, that it was "dominated by the upper class," a view which is hard to sustain.[47] Mark Pegg has noted similarly that the work of the BBC's production staff was carried out "all too frequently from the advice of their own metropolitan, middle-class circle of friends."[48]

LeMahieu has addressed the issue of class relations more directly – and with some accuracy - when examining the privileged class backgrounds of its staff, as have Burns and Pegg.[49] The latter identifies BBC culture as being composed of "an intellectual ambience composed of the values, standards and beliefs of the professional middle-class, especially that part educated at Oxford and Cambridge.[50] LeMahieu has also stated that it "projected an image of bourgeois culture and traditions..." but without extending assertion to analysis.[51]

References to the presence of class as an issue are often historically accurate but oblique. Michael Tracey has referred to the builders of the BBC as "stiff-upper-lipped gentlemen," their notion of "public broadcasting" "flowing from Victorian idealism and paternalism."[52] Tom Mills' PhD thesis is devoted to a study of the recent history of the broadcaster in terms of neo-liberalism in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century, but he only very briefly touches on the foundation of the Company in 1922. He suggests that the BBCo's nascent construction was an expression of "private interests" and "political elites" but like other

[46] Catherine Murphy, "'On an Equal Footing with Men?' Women and Work at the BBC, 1923-1939" (Goldsmiths College, University of London, PhD diss., 2011), 74; Seán Street, "Crossing the Ether: Public Service Radio and Commercial Competition in Britain with special reference to Pre-War Broadcasting," (Bournemouth University, PhD diss., 2003), 76.
[47] Arthur Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 157.
[48] Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society*, 95.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Burns, *Public Institution and Private World*, 42.
[51] LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, 182.
[52] Michael Tracey, *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 16. The earliest reference to the term "public service broadcasting" appeared in the record of a broadcasting committee meeting in May 1922. The concept was suggested by a representative of the Marconi company, one of the founding commercial enterprises of the BBCo set up later that year.

scholars, stops short of substantial analysis that might produce a clearer understanding of the institution.[53] Mills deploys the sociology of class to analyse the modern BBC, the focus of his research, but not here. McKibbin's chapter on broadcasting in the much cited *Classes and Cultures in Britain 1918-51* is also without summative comments on the BBC's essential nature in terms of class but does include an evaluation of the subject by inference, especially via its attitudes to its working-class audience, its output, John Reith, and, more directly when briefly discussing the class structuring of the staff.

Murphy's study of women in this period is at least extremely helpful in showing an awareness of class in terms of employment practices. The focus on women is advantageous in highlighting three issues particularly: the positional strength of middle-class vis-à-vis working-class employees; their very rigidly designated positions within the institution's hierarchical framework of occupations according to functions and the high value the BBC placed on a "good education" at a "good school" if individuals wanted to win secretarial jobs, and the indispensability of both when being considered for appointments to higher programme building positions.[54]

Describing the organisations as "middle class" establishes a starting point and no more. The term is also imprecise when it is generally agreed that "middle-class" incorporates poorly paid clerks at its lower end and highly prosperous owners of capital at its upper. The term "bourgeois" is much more accurate as this thesis will confirm and explain, but it has yet to be applied in the literature beyond superficial labelling. All such assertions lack rigour. A serious weakness on the part of these scholars from a Bourdieusian perspective is in their decision not to apply the concept of class in relational terms. Deciding not to relate the

[53] Tom Mills, "The End of Social Democracy and the Rise of Neoliberalism at the BBC." University of Bath PhD diss., 2014, 6-7.
[54] Murphy, "Equal Footing with Men," 94-99.

BBC's "middle class" character to other classes in Britain's hierarchical class structure is simply not being sufficiently analytical.[55]

McKibbin's depiction of the attitude of the "governing" or "privileged" classes' attitude to the lower classes - "They tended to see the working class only in their subordinate role - as people who carried your baggage or from whom you might buy a railway ticket. Even the lower middle class was largely unknown to them" – exemplifies the greater power of relational thinking in understanding the social world.[56] The oft-noted reaction of "corporation mandarins" being shocked in 1938 by the "discovery that the world at large dined before 8 pm" is further proof of how divided the worlds of the dominant class and the lower classes truly were between the wars.[57]

In discussing sites of power struggle – programme choice and construction, access to the microphone, the key BBC publications *Radio Times* and *The Listener*, describing the BBC as 'middle class' merely opens up questions that require answering: How much power did this 'middle class' institution wield and over whom? In what way did the middle-class nature of decision-makers shape policy and judgement? What was a 'middle-class' BBC's relationship to other classes, the petty bourgeoisie, the working-class, the aristocracy? As will be shown in this thesis, Bourdieu's sociology enables these questions to be answered because of his insistence on the essentiality of the relational aspect of class theory.

[55] Reading Bourdieu, it is highly possible that he would be more disparaging than this: "half-finished" might be a better interpretation of his linguistic usage when critiquing approaches he thought were below par, not useful or simply bad.
[56] McKibbin, *Classes & Cultures*, 246.
[57] David Chaney, 'Audience Research and the BBC in the 1930s: a mass medium comes into being', in James Curran, Anthony Smith and Pauline Wingate, *Essays in Impacts and Influences, Media Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Methuen, 1987), 261, quoting Robert Silvey, *Who's Listening? The Story of BBC Audience Research* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), page unknown.

This thesis is a response to the absences left by the literature of the BBC to this point, directly examining the organisation in class relational terms in the hope of stimulating debate about the depiction of the organisation as a fully socially constructed object and the value of using class as a technique of analysis. It will take the broad shape of three investigations: one into Reithian recruitment of production and administrative staff; a second into the recruitment of sports mediators and thirdly, via a case study, an exploration of a notable sports broadcasting event, namely the first live running commentary broadcast from Twickenham in January 1927. These enquiries will reveal the class-bound nature of the BBC on recruitment and production processes and practices. Informing each part of these investigations will be the social theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, which will be applied to the BBC and its Reithian practices. The choice of a single sociologist is accidental rather than strictly methodological. It was an organic encounter with his key ideas about the importance of utilising the conceptualisation of class relations to explain social inequality in societies such as twentieth-century Britain which provoked the idea of applying it to this research project. His confirmed beliefs on the place of class relations constructing societies, from the meta-field of the state downwards, is so encompassing that accommodating another thinker's social theory would require greater space than is available here.

Historiography of BBC Radio Sport and Social Class 1922-39

The literature on inter-war BBC radio sport is less than extensive. Just two historians of sport have specifically explored the subject between the wars. Mike Huggins' work frequently argues for the importance of social class being taken into careful consideration in the study of the history of sport.[58] In his extended article, *BBC Radio Sport 1922-39*, he ties sports practices there to social class in a wide-ranging discussion of the development of radio

[58] Mike Huggins, "Sport and the Upper Classes: Introduction," *Sport in History*, 28, no. 3 (September 2008), 351-3.

broadcasting.[59] He references the significant influence of class on participation in sports such as rugby union and notes the Boat Race's connection to the ancient universities as part of a bias towards "more middle-class and metropolitan events." He also recognises the social tensions that may have resulted from making choices of sports and sporting events that reflect elitism and exclusivity, as opposed to inclusivity, in a class-divided society. He is right to point out that much of the working class did not have access to a radio by the outbreak of war."[60]

On running commentaries, which began in early 1927, Huggins opines that "commentary generally put across norms of amateurism and sportsmanship through its subjects, presenters and comments" and reflected the sporting values of newspapers with petty-bourgeois appeal - *Daily Mail*, *Times* or *Daily Express* - rather than a working-class organ such as the *Sporting Life*."[61] Most crucially, he has described BBC sport between the wars as being "underpinned by class and cultural biases" which had direct consequences for both "the nature and extent of broadcasting coverage, and of listener interest."[62]

In his monograph on the history of inter-war British horse-racing, the same author gives a distinct nod to the existence of class inequality in the sporting realm and the BBC's role in alternately, in his view, reducing it by using racing to achieve populist effect but conferring respectability on the sport's association with nefarious practices in race fixing and gambling.[63] Huggins' correct assessment of the early BBC in "wanting to promote 'correct' social attitudes and enhance its own respectability" did not lead to his alerting us to the social class of its racing commentators, unfortunately. Huggins, however, more than any other historian who has written about the BBC and sport has contributed to the establishment of the

[59] Mike Huggins, "BBC Radio Sport 1922-39," *Contemporary British History*, 21, no. 4 (December 2007), 493.
[60] Huggins, "BBC Radio Sport," 499, 508.
[61] Ibid., 508.
[62] Ibid., 501.
[63] Mike Huggins, *Horseracing and the British* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) also includes material on the broadcasting of this sport, 49-53.

notion that issues of class are integral to the broadcaster's culture and product. His identification of many commentators possessing privileged backgrounds in his and Jack Williams' *Sport and the English, 1919-39* will be noted in Chapter Two.[64] Huggins is rare among historians of sport in commenting on Bourdieu, suggesting that, "modern cultural theorists like Bourdieu have adopted an over-simplistic model of respectable bourgeois life," in the context of a discussion of inter-war betting.[65] This thesis argues indirectly that Bourdieu's class theories are not simplistic, even if they are not beyond criticism.

Richard Haynes's substantial paper on Seymour Joly de Lotbinière, Head of Outside Broadcasting from 1935 to 1940, investigates a hitherto little known figure in British radio history and establishes his importance in developing sports broadcasting, particularly the practice of producing effective live running commentaries.[66] He (Haynes) is quick to acknowledge the class affiliation of this son of a French-Canadian who elided easily into the higher strata of Britain's complex middle-class social geology. In two strands of his paper on inter-war sports radio commentary, examinations of the "codes and conventions" of early commentary and the relationship between commentators and their audience, Haynes ignores the issue of social class. In a third, tracing the difficult relationship between the organisation and the football authorities in obtaining permission to broadcast live soccer, he mentions the BBC's "Corinthian values," the ideology of gentleman amateurism, extremely briefly in his explanation.[67] Thirdly, in a paper on the use of autobiography of sports commentators, Haynes incorporates class into a discussion of the banes and boons of the use of this source

[64] Mike Huggins and Jack Williams, *Sport and the English, 1919-39* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).
[65] Huggins, *Horseracing*, p 10.
[66] Richard Haynes, "'Lobby' and the Formative Years of Radio Sports Commentary, 1935 – 52," *Sport in History*, 29, no.1 (March 2009), 25-48.
[67] Richard Haynes, "There's Many a Slip 'Twixt the Eye and the Lip: Exploratory History of Football Broadcasts and Running Commentary," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 34, no. 2 (June 1999), 146.

type for the scholar.[68] However, Haynes's priorities do not include careful consideration of the influence social class relations may have had on Lotbinière's work; rather it is Lotbinière's significance in developing the techniques of live running commentary and his attempts both before and after the Second World War to construct an effective group of commentators that most interests him. He does, though, make a connection between commentator choices and social class; these will be noted in Chapter Two also. Finally, Williams' monograph on cricket's broadcasting history references class briefly, noting in the inter-war period that broadcast cricket had "strong connections to privilege," illustrating this with a list of leading commentators' public school backgrounds and suggesting that "The public school connection may have influenced the tone of commentary."[69] He also offers the view that "This upper- and upper middle-class presence has perhaps also reflected the continuing strength of cricket in private sector education and that the BBC had been very much an establishment organisation."

The small number of scholars to have examined class and BBC sport in this period and the lack of an intensive study of the topic by any academics means that the space for new research is extensive. This thesis will be able to show in terms of its mediators in talks, commentaries, eye-witness reports, discussions and miscellaneous other pieces of sports output to what extent and in which way radio sport was a function of class relations between 1923 – the year of the first piece of sports output – and the end of 1939. This in turn will reflect light back on to the BBC more widely as it should be safely assumed that it is extremely unlikely for a class-constructed radio sports object to have been created as an autonomous sub-field with its own features and practices.

[68] Richard Haynes, "Voices behind the Mic: Sports Broadcasters, Autobiography, and Competing Narratives of the Past," in *Tapestry of Memory in Evidence and Testimony in Life-Story Narratives* eds. Nancy Adler and Selmer Leydesdorff, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 153-176.
[69] Jack Williams, *Cricket and Broadcasting* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). 109.

Key Research Questions

These aims and objectives can be distilled into three specific research questions. Firstly: is it possible to identify a pattern in staff recruitment during the period 1922-39 and if so, what was it and what caused it? Secondly, did an identifiable recruitment pattern and, if it existed, its determining ethos, extend to the choice of sports mediators during the period; and if it did, to what extent? Thirdly, if patterns are found to exist, to what extent did these change over time, in what way and why? As yet no systematic analysis of the class origin of the BBC's staff has been carried out by academics. The same is true of BBC staff mediators.

Methodology and Sources

The methodological approach used in answering these research questions aims to be strictly empirical in the sense that all conclusions, evaluations and hypotheses are intended to be rigorously scientific: i.e., evidence-determined. The use of primary evidence sits at the heart of the research process. Two source types have dominated the research period: original documents held at the BBC's Written Archive Centre and the memoirs of its commentators and staffers. The sizable repository of staff memoirs form an essential pool of data enabling an understanding of the BBC's class-derived nature as well as uncovering its operational practices and their stability or tendency to change. Many are rich in anecdote, many of which, some unwittingly, are of enormous value to researchers. Almost all auto-biographers include the stories of their entry to the BBCo or BBC in their narratives, even if afterwards their lack of class-awareness or shyness about the subject leads to social class fading from view or not existing at all. This does not prevent scholars being able to classify them according to social class, based on prime indices such as their education and the class situation of their parents, available in a variety of sources, including census data and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. These sources gave up the data for the members of staff in Chapter One's section

on ‘Building the Staff” and for the mediators included in Chapters Two and Four. Only the memoirs of Lancelot Sieveking and Teddy Wakelam made the case study in Chapter Three possible.

The weekly organ of the BBC, its mouthpiece, *Radio Times*, which began publication in September 1923, is also vital for understanding the organisation’s class character. It is possible to divine this via its editorial choice of article subjects, its programme descriptions, its biographical information of presenters, commentators and reporters, of various members of staff, its reactions to the zeitgeist and, in all these categories, via the refusals it reveals. Studying the contents of *RT* also helps to understand the contribution the BBC made to that *spirit of the times*, or way in which it clearly tried to.

Research into the life and career of John Reith up to his departure from the organisation in 1938 is absolutely essential to any serious scholarship concerning the BBC from 1922 to 1939, but it is particularly the case in any study of recruitment. Indeed, understanding the motives forming recruitment practices lays open an essential path to understanding the organisation in this period, *per se*. The sources pertaining to him divide into many types: his own writings, particularly his autobiography, *Into the Wind* and his early volume covering the first year and a half of the BBCo, *Broadcasting Over Britain*; his diaries, edited by Charles Stuart; his internal memos and short letters to members of staff held in the BBC Written Archives; books about him, principally the Andrew Boyle and Ian McIntyre’s biographies and his daughter’s memoir; comments about Reith in the numerous staff memoirs and comments and assessments made of and about him in works on broadcasting and the BBC specifically.[70] Deliberately held until last is another source: Reith’s unexpurgated diaries.[71]

[70] Reith, *Into the Wind*; Charles Stuart, ed., *The Reith Diaries* (London: Harper Collins, 1975); Ian McIntyre, *The Expense of Glory, a life of John Reith* (London: Harper Collins,19 Collins 1993); Andrew Boyle, *Only the*

These reveal more fully Reith's internal emotional life and his thought processes. Without this knowledge, a fully meaningful understanding of Reith's personality, which in his time so determined the life of the monopoly broadcaster in so many forms - in demeanour, structure, tone, content and policy, indeed, its own distinctive habitus, - is scarcely possible.

In his books, articles and internal memos, Reith did not explicitly refer to social class – the subject was taboo for the dominant class in public conversation unless for specific purposes; the subject of class led too easily to the issue of class conflict. This remained a subject of critical importance throughout the inter-war period with the rise of the working-class voter and its notional political party, the Labour party and the growing power of the trade union movement. At the BBC, a threatened dominant class followed both a conscious and unconscious policy throughout the 1920s and 1930s of trying to deal with these threats in part by avoiding discussion of class. Among the thousands of talks between 1923 and 1939, the subject of social class was almost entirely absent. This policy also elided with another: the avoidance of controversy, despite Reith's successful battle to win the right to be allowed to broadcast 'controversy' in 1928, in reality the removal of outright political censorship at the hands of Parliament. In 1924 Reith made a significant policy statement where he stressed the essentiality of avoiding "the things which are, or may be, hurtful."[72] Widening debate on the hegemony of the power of the dominant class was too potentially injurious to that class to be considered worthy of risk.

Wind Will Listen, Reith of the BBC (London: Hutchinson, 1972); Marista Leishman, *My Father, Reith of the BBC* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 2006).

[71] Reith's unexpurgated diaries from 1912 to the Second World War and beyond are available at WAC, files beginning 'S60/5/'.

[72] John Reith, *Broadcast over Britain* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), 34. This famous quote in full: "As we conceive it, our responsibility is to carry into the greatest possible number of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement, and to avoid the things which are, or may be, hurtful."

Other documents at the BBC Written Archive Centre in Berkshire have been used extensively. For the BBC sport researcher of 1923-1940 this archive is the chief repository of valuable primary source material such as individual sports files, event files, venue files, contributor files and committee files which sometimes disclose why choices and other decisions regarding sports, events and mediators were made. A number of programme and news report scripts are available.

From around 1926 the expansion of the BBC saw the expanded use of the inter-office and inter-station "memo". Traffic from outer stations and later regions appears to have been prolific. The memo is a crucially important source of information for understanding a variety of the BBC's intrinsic nature in practical and ideological terms. Opinions from key decision makers in the Talks and Outside Broadcasting departments are often to be gleaned from apparently casual pencil comments in the margins of a memo sent neither by them nor to them. These could be attitudes to certain sports, sporting issues or to BBC commentators and talkers. Revelations of class-induced attitudes of staffers are frustratingly rare, but when they do occur they may be stunningly important, for example Richard Dimbleby's comments on a colleague in 1936 (see Chapter Four). It should be said that the memoir can provide the same startling moments, such as Stewart MacPherson's account of his treatment by John Snagge when trying to gain entry to the BBC (ditto).[73] Letters, especially to and from freelance commentators, talkers and eye-witness account makers, though fewer in number than ideal, are important in enabling a study of the semiotics of BBC people, so useful in revealing social class attachments. Minutes of Programme Board and Committee meetings reveal discussions regarding programme choices, sport included. The nature of minute-taking, however, so often completely omits the meat of the matter, the exchange of opinions of the

[73] Stewart MacPherson, *The Mike and I* (London: Home & Van Thal, 1948), 34-40.

members likely as not to be frank and at least fairly full. Decisions such as not approving the broadcasting of greyhound racing in the 1930s are given without a narrative of how that decision was made and how close any vote on the issue went.

Staff files held at the WAC are also immensely helpful in revealing details of personal biographies enabling class definition via education. Annual summative reports on the employee's work may expose personal character traits strongly suggestive of having been produced by social class attachment. That of John Green, who joined the News department in the 1930s, is an outstanding example relevant to this piece of research. Unfortunately, many staff files have been disposed of. Fortunately, they do exist for significant individuals such as Heads of Outside Broadcasting Gerald Cock and Seymour Joly de Lotbiniére, who occupied this key position from 1932-1935 and 1935-1939, respectively, and for John Snagge, OBs producer from the mid-1920s and for Howard Marshall, a key BBC reporter, producer and cricket commentator during the 1930s. The availability of staff contributor files is much better, however, so many sports commentators' careers can be investigated, George Allison (soccer) and Teddy Wakelam (rugby union and lawn tennis) being two obvious examples.

Existing records of sporting live commentaries, available in the BBC Sound Archive at the British Library in St. Pancras, London, are merely fragmentary archaeological remains. No official sound recordings were made by the BBC of its own output before 1931. It is not possible to know how many recordings of sports output were made and why, and what became of them all over time. The material which survives is scant and tends to focus on programmes made for the national channel in its three incarnations, '2Lo', 'National' and 'Home' in the 1922-to-1939 period. They usually consist of short pieces of no more than four minutes. This is more satisfactory when listening to a recording of a horse race commentary – but almost wholly unsatisfactory when the source under study consists of just three or four

minutes of a soccer match, a rugby league cup final or a rugby union international match. Source availability also suffers from the tendency of staff down the decades having a bias towards preserving the popular event of an agreed "national" status: the FA Cup Final, the Boat Race and the Derby, for example. Given that these form less than 1% of BBC sports output in any given year, such bias is unhelpful to this particular study. The remains of 'Varsity sports programming are almost non-existent; the same is true of sports such as golf, swimming, mountaineering, angling and – Wimbledon aside – lawn tennis. The apparent metropolitan bias, or possibly the lack of resources there means an almost total absence of regional output. Given the possibility that many households in, say, Gloucester, Preston or Dudley listened primarily to their local station, consuming as much if not more local sports output than national, this is a huge loss.

An original source is also used at certain points in the project: a database of BBC radio sports output from the first identifiable sports item in April 1923 through to the last day of 1939. The aim was to make the database complete. It was constructed using three sources: the daily programme listings in *Radio Times* and *The Times* and from the "Programmes as Broadcast" books held in the BBC Written Archive Centre. Though impossible to be fully complete on account of the lack of "news in sport" records outside 1937-9, it reveals a highly usable picture of sports output, including for the most part the names of the mediators also.

For Bourdieu, the chief sources from his own work used in the research project were his *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (with Loic Wacquant), *Distinction* and *Forms of Capital*.[74] The first of these was particularly helpful because of the format of the bulk of the volume: transcripts of a conversation between Wacquant and Bourdieu. This allowed the latter to

[74] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 242-58.

explain the progression and current state of his theory at a relatively late stage in his career. The informality of the setting allowed Bourdieu the freedom to encompass a range of ideas concerning his thinking in brief, concisely-expressed passages. It is also useful in allowing him to contextualise his work against other sociologists, other forms of sociology and other disciplines.

In terms of problems concerning sources, despite the abundance of material in the Written Archive Centre the reticence with which staffers approach their discussions surrounding output and its mediators in terms of explaining motive is as frustrating as it is common. For the most part who mediated sport is retrievable but to an even greater extent the reason or reasons why *this* person was invited as opposed to *that* person is not. For those researching sports output, the lack of explanation for the go-ahead for certain events to be broadcast in Programme Board minutes is a serious difficulty and maddening to deal with.

The deliberate avoidance of disclosure with regard to the always controversial subject of social class in the between-wars period on the part of dominant class members was another problem in working with these data sources. This plays directly into Bourdieu's contention that the power of the dominant is maintained partly through its hidden nature. So a piece of evidence as obvious as a BBC member of staff, the product of a public school and 'Varsity, displaying class prejudice in a memo or indeed in a memoir is rare. In this period where inter-class power was so disputed through the challenge of the trade union movement, the Labour party, the left wing press and the radical intelligentsia, the requirement to hide class superiority itself as well as its perquisites was immensely strong. Yet the clear avoidance of the issue that a close study of *Radio Times* and the BBC daily listings in the inter-war period reveals may have an additional cause. As Waites has pointed out, the Great War was replaced by class war in the 1920s (and beyond). The form it took, informed by extremely contentious

but fashionable pseudo-scientific theories of eugenics was at odds with a central tenet of Reith's emergent philosophy of broadcasting: the achievement of social cohesion. BBC products thereby ignored class conflict.[75] Indeed, the subject of class seems to have been avoided altogether, a decision meeting another strand of Reith's philosophy, the avoidance of controversy.[76] This must be qualified, however: the controversies to be avoided were those pertaining to interests protective of mainstream conservative opinion.

Despite these problems, it is fair to comment that sufficient evidence has been available for the aims and objectives and key research questions of the project to have been met and answered. Any inadequacy in the results is due to the researcher rather than the quantity or quality of the evidence.

Race and the inter-war BBC

The BBC between the wars reflected British social reality, just as Reith tried to influence society's post-war organic development. Britain, in the inter-war period was, unexceptionally in the developed world, a racist society. Active discrimination against non-white races, Jews and the Irish was rife throughout the period across its institutions, homes, educational establishments and workplaces. Reithianism was a sharply defined outlook and set of beliefs which held sway throughout Reith's tenure as BBC day-to-day chief, rarely straying from conservative ideologies.

The subject of the BBC and race requires a depth of study and consideration that cannot be given more than brief consideration here. However, it is fair to say that the BBC's attitude to race and racial issues was ambiguous. Soon in the glare of the national spotlight and largely pursuing policies with a sense of moderation, overt statements of white racial superiority

[75] Bernard Waites, *A Class Society at War, England 1914-18* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), 335-343, in Patrick Joyce, ed. *Class* (Oxford Readers) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[76] Scannell & Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 168.

were unlikely. But there was no dissent in either programming or *Radio Times* from the subjugation of the non-white races that sat at the centre of the imperial ideal. Entertainment was frequently put on which nourished a view of black people *en masse* as backward "natives" through its seemingly constant presentation of "Nigger Minstrel" acts and songs. A series of articles in autumn 1930 on Africa in *RT* dealt in disparagement of "the natives" but also in a not unkind patronisation. In one article on South Africa, the author poured scorn on both white settlers and the black indigenous tribes alike.[77] In contrast, individual black artists such as Paul Robeson, "Hutch" (Leslie Hutchinson), Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington were put on the air and in programme notes were treated with the respect their stellar talents deserved.[78] Hutchinson, a huge star in Britain, was still referred to by his colour when he was described in 1931 as "the brilliant Negro pianist."[79] The music of the celebrated English mixed race English composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was regularly broadcast across the national and local stations in the twenties. The Aberdeen station broadcast 'A Night with Coleridge-Taylor' in 1924 and 2Lo presented 'A Coleridge-Taylor Programme' in August 1928.[80] Our period ended with six programmes entitled, 'The Negro Sings', which, despite its surface ambivalence, at least showcased black talent and may have enhanced the prestige of black people in the eyes of the British audience.

The immense difficulties facing black men and women in making their way in the upper echelons of British sport in the 1920s and 1930s meant that their appearances on air could only be limited at best. A notable exception is the West Indian cricketer Learie Constantine's 1928 talk during a tour in which, as on his previous English tour of 1923, he distinguished

[77] See for example, *Radio Times*, October 24, 1930, 241 and *Radio Times*, November 7, 1930, 381.
[78] Robeson appeared often on air after 1925; a feature article on him appeared in *Radio Times* 15 September, 1933, 623. Armstrong's music was heard nineteen times during the inter-war period according to *Radio* Times (including a concert OB in Plymouth in April 1934). Ellington was heard more often- a dozen times in 1933 alone – and live performances were relayed from London in 1933 and from New York in 1932, 1938 and 1939.
[79] *Radio Times*, October 2, 1931, 70.
[80] *Radio Times*, January 6, 1928, 23.

himself as a hard-hitting batsman, highly capable fast bowler and extraordinary fieldsman.[81] His appearance was owed to a philosophical thread sown into the material of sports output across the entire period: due respect was occasionally bestowed upon individuals whose profiles – social and, in this case, racial too – did not fit the organisation's normative template for invitation to the microphone. Black boxers' bouts were sometimes covered. Tommy Farr's attempt to win the World Heavyweight crown from Joe Louis was aired in 1937, where interest was concentrated on the white Welshman rather than the black American. Conversely, in September 1935, Alastair Cooke broadcast a talk on 'The American Negro' which if its accompanying *RT* notes are a guide, offered a liberal perspective on the African American. In another example of enlightenment, the pioneering anthropologist from the USA, Melville J. Herskovits, gave a talk on the National station in 1937. Herskovits, the son of Jewish immigrants, was an outspoken advocate of African nationalism, and founded the first University courses on African-American studies in his country.

While outstanding black sportsmen and artists could be treated with respect, on 25 May 1928, the Manchester Station's Empire Day *Children's Hour* programme offered a broadcast that was more typical of inter-war output.

> A Plantation Afternoon. 'Little Alabama Coon' (Starr); 'Croon, croon, underneath the moon' (Clutsam), 'Look out for the Hoodoo-doo-doo-Man' (Evans), sung by Harry Hopewell. A Little Coon's Prayer' (Hope), 'Little Snoozy Coon' (Eric Coates), sung by Betty Wheatley. Selection of Negro Melodies, played by Eric Fogg. 'Why the

[81] Gerald Howat, *Learie Constantine* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), 41-3, 50-55.

> Elephant Walks Alone,' a story that nigger mammies tell their piccaninnies, by Guy Brown, told by Hylda Metcalf.[82]

The term, "coon" has been described as "one of the most insulting of all anti-black caricatures. The name itself, an abbreviation of raccoon, is dehumanizing." [83] According to the Jim Crow Museum, "The Coon caricature…portrays black men as lazy, ignorant and obsessively self-indulgent; these are also traits historically represented by the word *nigger*. The BBC constantly used these terms between the wars, seeing no disconnection between the respect they accorded Armstrong, Constantine and Coleridge-Taylor and the racism of these two abusive labels.

The conflicting forces of respect and deep disparagement of black people were held in a state of tension at the BBC: preaching racial equality was out of kilter with mainstream social thinking of the age – one might note here the anti-Semitism of the Bloomsbury group as an acute example - while the promotion of socio-biological racial hierarchical philosophy and pseudo-science of eugenics was almost certainly considered too controversial for in-depth scrutiny or discussion.

According to Jean Seaton, the BBC was an anti-Semitic institution, even set against the widespread and entrenched anti-Jewish racism across British society.[84] Yet there is evidence that the BBC's relationship with Jewish Britons and attitude to the virulent antisemitism of the whole inter-war period was a mixture of prejudice and tolerance. In terms of staffing, there does not appear to be any direct evidence of racial policy but Eric Maschwitz was the only Jew found to be in a notable position (editor of *Radio Times*) during this research

[82] *Radio Times*, May 18, 1928, 321.
[83] David Pilgrim, "The Coon Caricature," (October 2000, edited 2012), Ferris State University Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/coon/.
[84] Jean Seaton, "The BBC and the Holocaust," *European Journal of Communication*, 2, no. 1 (2007), 65-6.

project. Harold Abrahams (athletics) and H. F. Faudel-Phillips (equestrianism) were the only commentators who were Jewish or who had strong Jewish connections.[85]

In trying to interpret BBC staff attitudes to Jews and antisemitism, which was "rife" in Britain according to one insider, the controversy surrounding the question of whether or not to send the number one athletics commentator, Harold Abrahams, to the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games is fruitful territory. Internal documents reveal a distinct lack of solidarity with the already grievous plight of German Jews by late 1935 when the debate began inside the BBC.[86] Stephen Tallents and Cecil Graves, Controllers of Public Relations and Programmes respectively, were both shown to have been rather more concerned not to offend the German hosts or create controversy than to stand by Abrahams. Though privately uncomfortable with the games being held – another debate which raged during 1935 and 1936 in both the USA and Britain - he publicly opposed the boycott movement. He was himself very keen to go, and even solicited a meeting with the Reichsportsführer, Hans von Tschammer und Osten, in December 1935, who assured him that he (Abrahams) would be made welcome.[87] In the event, perhaps due to pressure applied to the higher-ups by Head of Outside Broadcasting, Seymour Joly de Lotbinière, Abrahams went to the games but was given a subordinate role. It is extremely hard not to see this as an insult to both Abrahams and British Jewry.

BBC support for the Jewish cause in the face of Nazi persecution declined further in the next few years. Reith's successor, William Ogilvie, was found at the beginning of the Second World War to have shown a more than neglectful position vis-á-vis Jewish persecution, underlining Seaton's verdict. In 1939, staffer Harmon Grisewood paid a visit to Germany and upon returning to Broadcasting House went to see the Director-General.

[85] His Jewish forebears emigrated from Eastern Europe to Britain in the 18th century.
[86] WAC R47/578/1, Olympic Games – 1936 Berlin.
[87] Ibid.

> Mr Grisewood recalls: 'What he said was terrifying I can still remember it word for word. He said: 'You know the Germans are very sentimental people.' I said, 'Yes it's often explained to one that this is so.' He then said: 'Well, what we're going to do is broadcast the nightingale to the Germans. The cellist Beatrice Harrison will go into the woods near Oxford and play her cello. The nightingale will sing and we'll broadcast that to the Germans.' I felt there was no point really in going on with the conversation.[88]

As the war progressed and Nazi atrocities became known across the world, the attitude of the BBC was not only not to bring knowledge of racial mass murder by the enemy to the national audience but to deliberately cover it up.[89]

The Issue of Gender

Despite the absence of comment on gender relations in the inter-war BBC literature and among memoirists, women were institutionally discriminated against at the Corporation, as they were in other large organisations and in wider society. Their lower status had long been justified by pseudo-scientific arguments regarding their supposed physiological and psychological weaknesses compared to the male of the species. Though the Great War had seen vast numbers of women show this to be so much mumbo jumbo and had helped to turn the tide in the great debate concerning female suffrage, women suffered significant reverses in employment when men returned to civilian life. Reith's BBC was one organisation which offered employment for women, primarily in domestic and secretarial positions. But due to the BBC's constant expansion of services and a somewhat broad-minded Reith, opportunities

[88] Stephen Ward, "Anti-Semitism in the top ranks of broadcasting and Foreign Office staff led to the news being suppressed, says Stephen Ward," *Independent*, 23 October, 2011, March 9, 2021, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/why-bbc-ignored-holocaust-anti-semitism-top-ranks-broadcasting-and-foreign-office-staff-led-news-being-suppressed-says-stephen-ward-1462664.html.
[89] Ibid.

in production and programme building did open up, if in small amounts. Thus, women belonged in a lower echelon of their own, especially when one considers the fact that graduates from colleges such as Girton, Somerville or Lady Margaret Hall colleges had to begin their BBC careers proving their suitability of character in the typing pool.

The radical upheaval of the emergence of the "boyish woman" of the immediate post-war period, the smoking, Eton-crop haired, slender "boyette" or "flapper", scandalising many across society but attracting huge interest in the tabloid press and beyond, had a minimal influence on the character of a BBC output almost totally in the hands of dominant class men, and the BBC view of the world reflected each week in *Radio Times* (from September 1923).[90] However, in 1926 Reith appointed a woman, Hilda Matheson to be the organisation's Director of Talks, her considerable social capital outweighing any deficiency her gender may have presented. An alignment of the BBC with modernism is clearly suggested in the appointment. But Matheson lasted only until 1931. And as Murphy has found, after Matheson, Mary Somerville (Director of School Broadcasting, 1933) and Ira Benzie (Foreign Director, 1933) were the only women to be awarded a senior BBC post until 1953.[91] As will be shown in Chapter Two, women were used to mediate women's sport, but it was men's sport which provided the overwhelming bulk of sports coverage, itself a form of discrimination, especially on the national station. Men were often chosen to present programmes on women's sport also.

The ideologies of gender inequality and racial prejudice that permeated British society and, as an organic corollary, at the inter-war BBC mean that the "first class" qualifications that Noble looked for in the first General Manager and that Reith sought in his employment

[90] Susan Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain*, *1640-1990* (London: Routledge, 1999), 288.
[91] Murphy, "Equal Footing with Men," 290.

strategy did not extend to women, Jews or members of non-white races.[92] However, this short section on these types of social subordination is as far as this research project can go in terms of exploring the subject. This thesis concerns itself specifically with the question of social class hierarchies at the BBC as distinct from those of race and gender, and it does so explicitly for three main reasons. Firstly, the "traditional" treatment of social class marries with the issue of class as it was understood during the period: it was treated as a separate issue. Secondly and similarly, the small number of comments on class at the inter-war BBC in scholarly literature does not touch on racial or sexual inequality. Thirdly, in the view of this researcher, the latter two areas are of such importance as subjects of inquiry per se, and raise too many questions specific to these forms of discrimination that they require their own analytical space. That said, the employment of a number of women at the BBC helps us to understand class relations at the institution, so the issue of gender is included in the thesis via a highlighting of the significant female contribution to inter-war sports broadcasting. However, the under-employment of women as mediators of sports output and the under-broadcasting of women's sporting events should be stressed. There is a connection between class inequality and both gender and racial inequalities. Noble's and Reith's elitism embraced the view that lower-class individuals did not possess the "first class qualifications," the notion that some dominant class women could possess them, and the belief that non-white people only did so if their talent and fame led them to be internationally recognized as artists; as potential BBC employees they were beyond the pale.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One establishes the nature of the BBCo set up in late-1922 by the outgoing Coalition government and incoming Conservative government, its commercial character and its

[92] The newspaper advertisement for the BBCo's first General Manager stated that only those with "first class qualifications need apply." The significance of this is discussed in depth in Chapter One.

relationship to the British class system. It then outlines its growth between the wars and it establishes its importance in national life. Overall it examines the significance of both its growth and the significance of the first chief executive officer, John Reith. Finally, it empirically argues that Reith followed a policy of recruiting all members of staff above menial and artisanal functions from the dominant class.

Chapter Two forms an inquiry into the extent to which Reithian staffing policy affected the class composition of those who mediated sports output from the first sports broadcast in April 1923 to the end of 1929. It makes the case that dominant class members up to the highest fractions automatically conferred the prestige that Reith craved for the new national monopoly broadcasting organisation. It tests Haynes's view that BBC "...presenters" had an "upper- and upper middle-class background," both Haynes' and Huggins's assertion that commentators were "almost all 'gentlemen' in terms of education, social background and attitudes..." and Huggins' view that these "were established avenues to the microphone...as early as the 1920s."[93] The conclusions are informed by Bourdieusian thought.

Chapter Three takes the form of a case study, investigating the first BBC live sports running commentary in January 1927 through the prism of class and Bourdieusian thought. Through the testimonies of two key players in the event, organiser-producer Lance Sieveking and 'narrator' Teddy Wakelam, the construction of the Saturday commentary is revealed before briefly showing how the experimental broadcast was carried out by both aforementioned actors. Both events are then analysed and evaluated in terms of social class relations, with a particular focus on the issue of gentleman amateurism, still a key component in dominant class ideology in the 1920s with regard to sport.

[93] Huggins, *BBC Radio Sport*, 507.

Chapter Four returns to BBC mediators and class relations, this time examining the 1930-39 period and focusing particularly on the interplay of the energies of continuity and change. It will investigate the class origin of mediators at the national and regional stations. It will also attempt to ascertain the extent to which the cohort of BBC mediators in the earlier period changed in terms of class origin and whether this came about because of a deliberate change in policy among senior members of staff or by Reith himself (he left the Corporation in June 1938) or because of other causal factors.

The concluding chapter reflects on the findings set out in Chapters One to Four and does the following: firstly, it lays out the extent to which the study's key questions were answered; secondly, it shows how the findings outlaid in the thesis were made; thirdly, it comments on the effectiveness of the cross-disciplinary methodology and sources used; fourthly, it explains the significance of the findings; fifthly, it evaluates the limitations of the study and finally suggests a number of routes for the direction of future related research on the BBC and other similar institutions.

Chapter One: The Early BBC and Social Class: Birth, the appointment of Reith, Bourdieusian Social Theory and Reith's Ideology of Recruitment.

> "The BBC attracted to its service a considerable number of young men and women who 'believed in broadcasting' almost as a social crusade. They included a high proportion of young people and of men 'who had served in the War but who, on account of some awkward versatility or some form of fastidiousness, idealism or general restlessness, never settled down to any humdrum profession after war was over'."[1] Asa Briggs

> "People...know how to 'read the future that fits them, which is made for them and for which they are made...through practical anticipations that grasp, at the very surface of the present, what unquestionably imposes itself as that which 'has' to be done or said (and which will retrospectively appear as the 'only' thing to do or say)."[2] Pierre Bourdieu

> "I feel I have missed a good deal by not having been to one of the big schools."[3] John Reith, September 1926

Structure of the Chapter

A key proposition of this thesis is that scholars of the two BBCs – the British Broadcasting Company (1922-26) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (1927-) are required to address two closely related questions: "What is the intrinsic character of these organisations?" and "What is their fundamental nature?" Thus far, for all the excellence of much of their work, BBC scholars to this point have not been able to answer them satisfactorily. A range of answers can be found in terms of what the early BBC signifies or represents: it was a public service organisation; it was "Radio Reith"; it was a consolidator of establishment power; a barrier against the advance of socialist ideas; it was an open door to

[1] Asa Briggs, *A History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume II, The Golden Age of Wireless* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, London, 1965), 13, quoting Hilda Matheson, *Broadcasting* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1933), 52.
[2] Pierre Bourdieu in Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Polity Press, 1992), 130.
[3] WAC S60/5/2/2, Reith Diary Research Version, 1926-29 (September 1926), 132.

the advance of socialist ideas; it was a national broadcaster that opened the world up to a new democracy of listeners; it was an institution that changed domestic life dramatically and permanently. Such was the importance of the BBC by the mid-1930s – perhaps sooner – that an array of metaphors could be constructed in an attempt to clarify its nature, its meaning, its character. For the contemporary author and journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, the BBCo "...came to pass silently, invisibly; like a coral reef, cells busy multiplying, until it was a vast structure, a conglomeration of studios, offices, cool passages along which many passed to and fro; a society, with its king and lords and commoners..."[4] This grandiloquent response is not so far from the perspective from which this thesis approaches its subject, or, to speak sociologically, object: social class relations. A specific lens is applied to the forensic, empirical analysis: the social theory of the late Pierre Bourdieu, which, though it sees a narrowing of viewpoint on the one hand, simultaneously offers a wide outward extension of understanding. For though technical and precise, his theory of the field is deeply revealing of the mechanisms which organise the distribution and maintenance of power in modern capitalist societies. The uncovering is also profound in that for those convinced by his arguments, it reveals the nature of virtually all organisations within those societies.

In Bourdieu's sociological thought, the BBC can be usefully interpreted as a field. A skilled user of metaphors himself, they are fields in the sense of constituting an arena where a game is played. In Bourdieusian games there are stakes for the players and profits for them to be won. Or, and this is of crucial importance, not won. Crucial in the conceptualisation is the fact that in many fields the profits are unavailable to those who are denied entry to the game. Here we may cite two examples: the field of an educational institution or the meta-field of the state itself where entry is reserved for those able to wield certain amounts of specific types of

[4] Malcolm Muggeridge, *The Thirties, 1930-40 in Great Britain* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1940), 44.

capital. Different conceptualisations of a field may be brought into service depending upon the angle at which one comes at the BBC.

The remainder of this chapter consists of three distinct but linked sections. Firstly, Bourdieu's theories of the field, capital, habitus, doxa and social violence are briefly outlined. Secondly, his theory of the socially constructed nature of societies is applied to the birth of the BBCo in October 1922, an historical event briefly explicated as a conduit to understanding the part John Reith played in the institution's subsequent development. Reith was a product of this nascence and virtually inseparable from it. He met the requirements of a role socially constructed by the demands of politicians and manufacturers of post-war Britain whose own roles were socially framed by rank, position and class. For Bourdieu, the game on the field was played by rules, both field and rules being socially constructed. In the sub-field of this project, entry to the field is the game; there are clear rules of entry and it is clear who sets these rules and constructs their purpose. In this study, the analytical exercise enables an understanding of the extent to which Reith really did operate as a free social actor and to what extent this was not the case. For this French thinker, field theory reveals the inter-play of power and in essence reveals the unequal possession of power in societies, a finding that usually in turn reveals two classes: a dominant and a dominated. The last and longest section of the chapter examines the sub-field of the BBCs' recruitment of white collar staff. In the game of recruitment this is to be expected where there are clear winners and losers in organisations within capitalist societies, in both private and public sectors. In the inter-war BBCs it is not power differentials that are important; rather it is the game's rules, how they operated and why they were put in place. In carrying out this exercise, the 'true' nature of the organisation can be revealed, or at least one interpretation of it: a Bourdieusian interpretation.

Bourdieusian Social Theory and its Application to the Inter-War BBC

At this point, it may be useful to outline the essentials of Bourdieu's social theory as far as they are relevant to this thesis. As we saw in the introduction, in Bourdieusian theory, human beings exist in social space and all understanding of human existence develops from this base. From his early empirical research studying peasant life in post-colonial Algeria and the academic world in his native France he developed an understanding of observable human existence in social spaces he labelled "fields", some discrete, some over-lapping. One of his many definitions ran, "A field may be defined as a network, or configuration of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and to the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation..."[5] He saw them as sites of struggle between competing individuals or "players" for position and power. Fields are many and varied: "The school system, the state, the church, political parties, unions..." are fields; "economic firms, high fashion designers or novelists" can be viewed as fields.[6] There are "fields of cultural production (the artistic field, the scientific field, etc.) and, beyond them...the field of the social classes" in the meta-field of the state.[7]

Field theory sees Bourdieu breaking away from the confines of the determinism of structuralism. Fields are structures but are dynamic, not static, producing "endless change" over time. The introduction of the temporal is essential in this theory and this too separates him from most subjective sociologies also. The historicity of fields is indispensable to understanding them. For Bourdieu, each moment of experience and every exchange and utterance in everyday reality is a construct of the past, as well as the present, inscribed by

[5] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 97.
[6] Ibid., 100, 102.
[7] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 242-58.

history. The distribution of power may change over time in a field, caused by the behaviour of social agents individually and collectively, by the rare achievement of their reflexivity – the realisation of a conscious understanding of their relationship to the configuration of power in the field. But primarily, humans are unaware of power as a socially constructing force, produced by the effect of social structures, due to its normally hidden nature. The agents of a dominant class follow "objectively oriented 'lines of action' that obey regularities and form coherent and socially intelligible patterns, even though they do not follow conscious rules or aim at the premeditated goals posited by a strategist."[8] Hidden too was the material, which both characterised the dominant class individual and allowed them to enter dominant class positions: two forms of symbolic capital, social and cultural.

Bourdieu's field theory organically changed over time and he was frank in stating that his understanding of reality was not total; that his attempt to define and bring order to social reality was incomplete and would likely remain so. He was explicit in stating that constant self-inquiry was essential to the scientist sociologist, but his belief in the validity and importance of capital in understanding fields was consistent. The structure of the field, he wrote, is defined by "the unequal distribution of capital" possessed by the individuals within it.[9] "This essential concept – "capital" - describes "sets of actually usable resources and powers."[10] Bourdieu divided capital into three "fundamental" types or forms, each with its own subtypes: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital, though he described another, symbolic capital. Not a fourth type, rather it embraced both social and cultural capital and described how their power operated. The term described an everyday world where power was possessed and wielded not through the concrete, such as in laws, decrees or rules,

[8] Bourdieu & Waquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 25, 98, 128; Annette Hastings and Peter Matthews, "Bourdieu and the Big Society, empowering the powerful in public service provision," *Culture and Society*, 43, no. 4 (October 2015), 547.
[9] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital*, 19.
[10] Elliot Weininger, "Pierre Bourdieu and Social Violence," in *Alternative Foundations of Class Analysis*, ed. Erik Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 21.

but by understandings and recognitions of the facts of life of the unwritten and the informal.[11] It described the power of the title or the membership of a profession or a club as signifiers of superior status, which, following informal social rules, were given their due by those below them in the class system. Each form of capital acts as a species of power or influence. Capital possession determines status within a field (for example, a workplace, organisation, firm but also a whole industry or 'world', such the art world, an education system, sport): "The strategies of agents depend on their position in the field, that is, in the distribution of the specific capital they bring to their position."[12] Possessing social capital, for example, individuals in the field can "mobilise by proxy the capital of a group (a family, the alumni of an elite school, a select club, the aristocracy, etc.) to give them exclusive advantages in the field."[13] Social and cultural forms of capital both play an essential role in field theory. Economic capital, though important for actors in gaining access to a number of fields, especially for those who were and are able to achieve an upward social trajectory, leaving one class behind and entering another, drew less of his attention. In order to give social everyday force to the hidden system of capital, individuals possessed something Bourdieu labelled "habitus".

Bourdieu defined habitus as a socially constituted system of dispositions that orient" "thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions."[14] Habitus constitutes a "system of dispositions...the basis from which lifestyles are generated,"[15] is a "system of tastes and preferences..."[16] Habitus consists of "...everyday choices in matters of food, clothing, sports, art, and music - and which extends to things as seemingly trivial as their bodily posture -

[11] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 118-9; Xiaowe Huang, "Understanding Bourdieu - Cultural Capital and Habitus," *Review of European Studies*, 11, no. 3 (2019) 45-9.
[12] Bourdieu & Wacquant, ibid., 101.
[13] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital*, 27, 11, n.
[14] Weininger, "Bourdieu & Social Science," 121, quoting Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 55.
[15] Pierre Bourdieu, "Sport and Social Class," *Social Science Information*, 17, no. 6 (December 1978), 833.
[16] Ibid., 834.

[and] serves as a vehicle through which [individuals] symbolize their social similarity with and their social difference from one another."[17]

Habitus activates the constant operation of distinguishing between one class and another. Displays of habitus give an individual access to membership of a prestigious group; the inability to possess or display the 'correct' habitus causes one to be excluded.[18] Habitus is a signifying, labelling and sorting process in systems of class. In the dominant class, the display of certain dispositions: the appropriate accent, clothing, type of car, place of abode, the holding of a certain opinion, usually disclosed with subtlety, acts as a force for inclusion in or exclusion from the dominant group. At the subtlest level of all, "The schemes of the habitus...owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will."[19] Bourdieu's conceptualisation explained more fully than hitherto the meaning of such terms of "knowing your place," understanding "where we belong." Thus whole classes fail to challenge a system of inequality of power, influence, wealth and life-chances which establishes and enforces their position, "in the scheme of things," as Bourdieu might have put it. In one definition of habitus, Bourdieu spoke (often) of habitus as a "feel for the game", an analogy which sees fields as contests for power with specific rules understood by the players.[20] He emphasised that this "practical sense" operates at an unconscious level: "one does not embark on the game by a conscious act; one is born in the game, with the game."[21]

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[17] Weininger, "Bourdieu & Social Science," 141.
[18] Bourdieu, *Sport & Social Science*, 28, 13, n. "Note that these forms of social capital can also form habitus where a mode of behaviour – upright bearing as opposed to slouching might be visible as a form of an individual's social capital – it being part of recognised dominant class body culture – but also as one of a set of attitudes or 'dispositions' that form the habitus of that social class. In a different field, slouching may be a form of social capital also part of the habitus shared by members of a street gang."
[19] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984), 484.
[20] Bourdieu & Waquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 129-30.
[21] Pierre Bourdieu, "O senso prático," (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 2009), 109, in E. C. L. De Souza and R. B. Feneli, "The study of organizational culture through practices: a proposal in the light of Bourdieu's legacy," Cad. EBAPE.BR, 14, no. 4, Rio de Janeiro (2016), https://wwwT cielo.br/brielo.php?pid=S1679-39512016000400872&script=sci_arttext&tling=en: Bourdieu & Waquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 128.

Bourdieu is speaking here of the dominant class or group in the relevant field. His statement that "A field is a game without an inventor and much more fluid and complex than any game that one might ever design" defines an original view of social reality and, crucially, the causes of its existence.[22]

Akin to the power of habitus is the operational power of the 'doxa', "'the universe of the undiscussed.'"[23] For Hastings and Matthews, "the doxa relates to 'what is taken for granted, to the reality that goes unanimously unquestioned because it lies beyond any notion of inquiry' (Deer, 2008, 120)."[24] For Bourdieu, doxas operate in fields to empower and disempower agents (as individuals or classes). It has the effect of subordinating agents lacking possession of capital in a field, becoming "...the 'natural attitude' of the dominated groups…" which is "misrecognized as socially arbitrary."[25] The doxa manifests itself as "common sense" to social agents, tending to make it appear unchallengeable. By using their superior position in a field, the dominant class's supply of various forms of capital to set up structuring organisations such as newspapers and pressure groups, and to use their connections to dominant groups and individuals in other fields, such as politicians, a dominant group or class can transform an ideological statement of opinion, often irrational, into a doxa. An example in inter-war Britain would be the notion that even though nominally now a democracy, the state required the continued existence of the monarchy. The right of the dominant class, the "educated", to govern is another. Gender inequality, which for Bourdieu has been the most powerful of inequalities in human societies, provides another excellent example where the irrational belief that a woman was only fit for some occupations

[22] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 104.
[23] John Myles, "Doxa to Experience, Issues in Bourdieu's Adoption of Husserlian Phenomenology," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21, no. 2 (2004), 92, quoting Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Polity,1977), 165–6.
[24] Hastings & Matthews, "Bourdieu & the Big Society," 549; Cécile Deer, "Doxa," in Michael Grenfell, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts* (Durham: Acumen, 2008), 118–24.
[25] Myles, ibid., 94.

and duties but not others, operated as a doxa to uphold a deeply paternalist society at all class levels. It is the 'taken for granted' nature of doxic beliefs that endows them with profound power.

At work here is symbolic violence according to Bourdieu: damage done to individuals, groups and classes without physical blows being struck. It is the unseen, unrecognised nature of systems of power which operate in field theory, structured to dominate and subordinate individuals, groups, classes or a whole gender, which endows them with a violent quality. As Hastings and Matthews put it, "The dominating classes need only '*let the system they dominate take its own course* in order to exercise their domination'"[26] The same authors further outlined (again citing Schubert) that "What is important is that symbolic violence is an 'unperceived' force of domination. As Schubert argues, it is "'effective and efficient…in that members of the dominating classes need exert little energy to maintain their dominance. [They] need only go about their normal daily lives, adhering to the rules of the system that provides them their position of privilege.'"[27]

These theories can be usefully applied to studying the inter-war BBCs from whichever direction or discipline scholars come. The inter-war BBC itself constitutes a field. As is true of all such organisations, individuals competed for power and position within a hierarchical structure. Individual departments can be envisioned as sub-fields: talks; news; outside broadcasts and so on. Entry to the field, the game, was structured, controlled by an application process. As we shall see below in some detail, those seeking entry brought different types of capital to the process; specific species carried certain amounts of weight. Capital or lack of it, determined entry or exclusion. Players entered through a shared habitus,

[26] Hastings & Matthews, "Bourdieu & the Big Society," 549. The authors do not include Bourdieu's 1977 work in their reference list but the work in question is likely to be Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory and Practice,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). Dan Schubert, "Suffering/Symbolic Violence," in Michael Grenfell, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2008), 184. The italics are in the original text.
[27] Hastings & Mathews, ibid., 549, Schubert, ibid., Bourdieu, ibid.

a set of attitudes and habits – dispositions for Bourdieu – which was highly distinctive, essentially including accent, syntax, manner, dress, and politics; in fine, the attributes of the English gentleman class. These were simultaneously forms of symbolic capital. Life at the BBC saw various doxas holding sway. The most easily identifiable are those pertaining to the doxas of the educated classes which defined normative attitudes and behaviours: the common sense of their right to rule; the racial, gender and class hierarchies which existed in post-war Britain; the monarchical principle; veneration of the war dead; belief in the rectitude of Britain as an imperial power. By no means did all members of staff believe in these, but Reith did, and he was not challenged in his time as day-to-day chief executive of the organisation.[28]

These doxas were the most dynamic aspect of the BBC field. It was one thing to possess the correct symbolic capital for entry, but this did not guarantee the correct politics, for example, or belief that the war dead did not die in vain, and so on. Lionel Fielden, Guy Burgess and Joseph McLeod are just three examples of people possessing abundant social and cultural capital but whose politics were on the left. Others such as Hilda Mathieson (Head of Talks from 1926) and regular freelance broadcasters Harold Nicholson and members of the Bloomsbury group held modernist views on art and literature which were atypical in terms of dominant class thought and attitude in this part of the twentieth century. This disjuncture draws us towards Reith and an inquiry into aspects of his personal biography – his desire to join the Labour party, his skill as a comic actor and his homosexuality – which clash markedly with what is thought normative in upper middle-class gentlemen of the age, or, to use Bourdieu, the commercial-managerial-professional fraction of the dominant class. Of course, detailed study of the elites, be they landed, bourgeois or clerical, reveals in a very large number of cases breaches of the expectations set out in the typical sermon, the

[28] Marcus Collins, "The fall of the English gentleman: the national character in decline, c. 1918-70," Historical *Research*, 75, no. 187 (2002), 93.

newspaper article, the speech and the headmaster's talk of the time. These breaches refine our understanding of the dominant class which through Bourdieu bring to mind the dynamic nature of fields caused by the fact that some human beings, despite their conditioning in the family and the education system, are capable of reflexivity and consciousness of their place in a structured system that operates to structure their behaviour. This speaks to considerations of continuity and change at the inter-war BBC, sharpening our awareness that while Reithian practices and principles may seem fixed, they may be subject to adaptation or radical change at any time. In the case of this project, we may consider how and to what extent Bourdieu helps the scholar to understand who was invited to join the BBC, who organised and administrated sports programming and who mediated sports content to audiences as speakers, reporters and commentators and through what systems or mechanisms. A project which began as an inquiry into the influence of social class on BBC sports output from 1922-39, is assisted with some force through the application of Bourdieusian social thought.

One thing needs to be added, however. For Bourdieu, dominant class power has an intrinsic desire to reproduce itself. It perpetually does this through social agents socialised as collaborators, and having internalized habitus, acting consciously or unconsciously, recognizing the necessity for them to act "in the spontaneous moment of their existence."[29] Though the BBC in this period may have adapted this way or that, almost always through external pressure prompting internal responses, at no time did Reith's BBC cease in reproducing its commitment to the rule of the nation's dominant class. This is not surprising given that the socially constructed executive branch of the state would not allow a technological advance as important as wireless telegraphy with its potential to transmogrify into a new medium of broadcasting, to develop independently.

[29] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 140.

The Birth and Early Development of the BBC with John Reith as General Manager

The first BBC arrived in the form of a private monopoly consisting of a combine of the country's leading radio equipment manufacturers set up by the Lloyd George-Conservative and Unionist Party coalition government in May 1922.[30] In doing this the coalition was reacting to pressure from three sources: the manufacturers who were keen to expand the market for their new products; the press and politicians in the Commons and Lords and from the existence of individual broadcasts already being made across the nation with increasing frequency. The most significant of these had been established in 1920 by the thrusting Marconi Company based in Chelmsford, Essex, where during that year and later in 1922, Peter Eckersley, soon to become a BBCo recruit, was spearheading the new form of communication by making entertainment programmes.[31] As well as famously broadcasting Dame Nelly Melba, the famous Australian opera singer, in June 1920, in May 1922 the Marconi London station tried to relay a world light heavyweight boxing title fight from Olympia in the British capital. Radio technology was not sufficiently developed to enable a simultaneous live commentary. The nearest to the much desired "as live" transmission that could be achieved was to telephone reports to a Marconi employee who would then announce them over the air. This underlines the fact that the government was reacting belatedly to a clear exigency, proven not least by other countries, including France, Canada and the USA, who had already launched their own systems.[32]

Issues surrounding the initiating of a broadcasting system were resolved at a meeting between the Post Office and the major manufacturers on 18 May 1922. Here the suggestion of a

[30] Asa Briggs, *A History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume I, The Birth of Broadcasting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 110; James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility, The Press and Broadcasting in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1981), 132.
[31] Peter Eckersley, *The Power Behind the Microphone* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1941), 36-43. Writtle and later BBC colleague (from the date of its founding) Arthur Burrows, described Peter Eckersley as "a fount of spontaneous humour," Arthur Burrows, *The* Story *of Broadcasting (*London: Cassell, London, 1924), 58.
[32] For the most thorough, though not the most up to date account of the birth of the BBC, see Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 93-142.

representative of the Marconi Company, which held the manufacturing patents, for a monopoly company to be established in which any of the hundred potential broadcasters could buy an interest via shares, was accepted by the government.[33] The founding of other vitally important ideas concerning the nature of future British broadcasting was also established there, notably broadcasting as a public service - "the very best the country could produce."[34] This aspiration may have been mannered comment rendered for such occasions but it was to have important implications for the future of British broadcasting. A meeting of the "Big Six" a week later saw the first recorded use of the term, "British Broadcasting Co." in a pencil note in a margin of the agenda.[35]

Eckersley, the first BBC chief engineer and one of Reith's first appointments wrote in a forthright memoir that "the demand for a [broadcasting] service was not therefore generated in "influential circles." The real stimulus causing organised broadcasting to begin operating was commercial and specialized: it came from those who wanted to create a market for the sale of wireless receivers."[36] However, a more satisfying explanation accepts the effects of a group of powerful influences. Not least of them was the power of government which held the whip hand. In their gift alone lay the power to allow a broadcasting system to develop. This they did. The decision of the Liberal-Tory coalition to grant the manufacturing sector permission to organise structured broadcasting represented an example of the shift in national

[33] "Wireless Telephony Broadcasting Conference 1922: Verbatim Report," (Royal Mail Archives, POST 89/1): 17, quoted in David Prosser, "Marconi proposes, Why it's time to rethink the birth of the BBC," *Media History*, 25, no. 3 (2019): 265, 272, 273. Prosser's discovery of the existence of a record of this meeting brings new evidence to light on the founding character of the BBCo, not least that it reveals that the Marconi company, not the Post Office, was the first to suggest that a monopolistic combine of large (and other manufacturers) was the best way forward in developing a national system of broadcasting.

[34] "Wireless Telephony Verbatim Report," 17, cited in Prosser, *Marconi Proposes*, 9; Thomas Beachcroft, British Broadcasting, Pamphlet, "British Life and Thought, no. 25" (British Council, 1946): 10; Tom Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 43.

[35] See also Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume One, 1922-39, Serving the Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), for an account of the birth of the BBC, 5.

[36] Peter Eckersley, *Power Behind the Microphone*, 50. See 48-53 for his account of the birth of the BBC.

high and parliamentary politics away from aristocratic power to bourgeois power as described by Bourdieu. John Davidson, a close ally of Baldwin, said of his becoming an MP in 1920,

> "The first thing that struck me on entering the House of Commons was the high percentage of hard-headed men, mostly on the make, who fill up the ranks of the Conservative Party. [They are] modern and unscrupulous...The old fashioned country gentleman and even the higher ranks of the learned professions are scarcely represented at all."[37]

Two years later, Lord Riddell, an ally of Lloyd George's summed up the post-war age well in describing the manufacturers who united to form the new broadcasting company: "the people who are at the back of this are not philanthropists, they are businessmen."[38] The sole peer on the first board of directors was Alfred Pease, whose father's baronetcy was created by Lloyd George in 1917. The younger Pease was a Liberal party politician whose commercial career consisted of taking a number of company directorships in industries such as coal and electric power, and in the family firm which had ownerships of coal mines, ironworks, textile mills and a bank. Now as Lord Gainford he became the BBCo's first chairman.

The fact that the first incarnation of the BBC, the British Broadcasting Company, was an amalgamation of the six leading telecommunications companies pioneering the new medium of broadcasting - Marconi, Metropolitan Vickers, Hotpoint Electric Appliance Company, Western Electric Company, General Electric Company and the Radio Communication Company - was partly a reflection of these changes in relative class power and partly a

[37] Robert Rhodes-James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative, J. C. C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1969), 103, quoted in Alan Clark, *The Tories 1922-97* (London: Orion, 1998), 7.
[38] Lord Riddell to H. Hirst, 10th February 1923, BBC Written Archives, unspecified file, quoted in Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 3.

reflection of the industrial-commercial nature of the early broadcasting industry. The power of this "Big Six" saw their managing directors and in the case of Noble, director (of GEC), form the first board of directors.[39]

John Reith dominates the historiography of the BBC. Briggs's declarative statement that he "made" the BBC is typical of the measure of his weight in BBC history. Where Briggs, writing the official biography of the institution, is ever-positive about Reith's place in the inter-war narrative, a number of academics have been sharply critical, seeing him as an authoritarian, an autocrat, a bully and, for more than one, a crypto-fascist.[40] The personal nature of many of the assessments of Reith has a tendency to detract from the rationality of informed debate through a lack of empiricism. It also draws attention from the systematic nature of his role in the new broadcasting organisation. It is more illuminating to frame Reith's immense contribution to the new monopoly broadcaster as a key component of a much broader structural development in the history of communications in Britain.

Reith' appointment as general manager was a practical step in founding a new British monopoly broadcasting operation. It also represented a dominant class object in a new field or social universe being given a dominant class member to oversee its arrival. The appointment was in the giving of the manufacturers broadcasting committee, set up in May 1922 at the prompting of the government. Sir William Noble, the committee's chairman, appears to have dominated the process from the available evidence.[41] Reith's application for the position came via his noticing or having his attention drawn to an advertisement in the

[39] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 126.
[40] Henry Fairlie, *The BBC,* in *The Establishment*, ed. Hugh Thomas (London: Blond, 1959), 194; Todd Avery, *Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics and the BBC, 1922-38* (Place of publication not identified: Routledge, 2016), 39; Curran & Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility*, 132; Simon Elmes, *Hello Again... Nine Decades of Radio Voices* (London: Random House, 2012), 194.
[41] See WAC S60/5/1/1, Reith Diary Research Version 1912-15; see Briggs, *Birth of* Broadcasting, 135-139 for the most detailed accounts of Reith's appointment to the General Manager position.

Morning Post, one of a select group of newspapers largely read by the bourgeois fraction of the dominant class.[42]

The letter which Reith supplied on 13 October is notable for its sureness and clarity of organisation as the applicant sets out a range of his 'first-class qualifications' for the job. Reith attached a *curriculum vitae*, which draws attention to his "considerable commercial experience...executive work in engineering administration," and his having come first in a field of sixty in an examination in Chartered Accountancy the previous winter.[43] But the application also serves as a demonstration of habitus interacting with a field, where the agent, Reith, shows true 'feel for the game'. Firstly he advertised his Aberdonian background after he had discovered via a copy of *Who's Who* at his club that Noble hailed from the Granite City. This caused him to amend his initial letter which at that moment resided in the outgoing mail box of his gentleman's club. Reith in later life thought this decisive in his being engaged. Secondly, in the third paragraph he used the pull of "two outstanding men, whose names I should suggest to you, and who would speak on the two scores mentioned," the men likely to be senior politicians which whom he had just been rubbing shoulders and the scores being his "character and ability." Thirdly, almost certainly not accidentally, he had typed the two pages on Cavendish Club headed note paper. This may have been standard practice at the time, but even so, as well as advertising Reith's status as a gentleman, this action may itself have been a self-advertisement of the fact that the applicant understood dominant class social rules and so was perfectly adapted to the position he sought.

[42] Brian Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting in Britain* (Southleigh: Lympstone, 2005), 22. According to Hennessy the others were the *Daily Telegraph*, *Manchester Guardian* and *Glasgow Morning Herald*
[43] Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting*, 22, 223, photo-reproductions of Reith's application letter and "attachment," his *curriculum vitae.*

Reith's appointment, at the behest of Noble upon interview, was unanimously approved by the board, Reith, was young – 33 - extremely dynamic and could boast outstanding achievements in commercial management and political administration. His diaries and autobiography self-reference a number of examples which expose personality traits that explain his success at the BBC to come. The authority of his speechmaking impressed many of the Americans who had dealings with him in 1917 as he procured weapons for the British war effort.[44] In carrying out work for the Royal Engineers on the Norfolk coast in 1918 he completed a job normally executed in a week in 22 hours.[45] Immediately after the war, while managing William Beardsmore & Co., in Scotland, he had "got things moving at the factory; had proper offices built; installed planning, progress and planning systems..." and successfully converted the company's production activities from a war-time to a peace-time footing.[46] Earlier, still in war time, upon successfully impressing a brigadier-general Reith reported, "You are a hell of a fellah,' he said. But I knew that."[47] Reith is boastful, but it is hard to doubt the veracity of his testimony given his transformation of the early BBC from a scattered group of tiny amateur broadcasting enthusiasts at the senior wireless manufacturers into an integrated radio organisation across the four kingdoms. He was to be knighted for this success as early as 1926, by which time the organisation had achieved international recognition.

In addition to the qualities of character he referenced in his application letter, Reith brought a fund of symbolic social and cultural capital to his application in addition to very considerable professional capital. He was the son of the Very Rev. Dr. George Reith, a leading Scottish cleric - Moderator of Scotland – and he had been at Gresham's, a Norfolk public school. He

[44] See WAC S60/5/1/2 Reith Diary Research Version, Jan 1, 1916-April 25, 1920. Dates presented in these footnotes are represented as they appear in the original document.
[45] John Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 73.
[46] Ibid, 79-80.
[47] Ibid.

was not 'Varsity educated due to a lack of family funds, much to his later regret.[48] Instead he accrued professional capital via training as an engineer and in chartered accountancy, and via practical experience in war service and the engineering industry in the early years of peace. Additionally, he brought considerable social capital to his application from his work with and connections to men in high politics, the London group of Unionist MPs, in the run up to the 1922 general election. Once his dynamism in face-to-face social interaction was brought into consideration it is unsurprising that he was the unanimous choice for the position.

Reith's stock of capital was similar to that of the most of the first BBCo board of directors. In late-nineteenth century Britain degrees in science and engineering formed a commonly taken pathway to senior positions in wireless manufacturing, an industry where technical and practical experience counted more than membership of status groups. But it was a route from which the working-class and petty-bourgeoisie were almost excluded for lack of access to education and training. Graduates in these fields almost exclusively sprang from public schools, independent schools and grammar schools.[49] The career of the BBC's first Director of Programmes, Arthur Burrows, did achieve high qualifications in engineering via night school education but in this he was unusual. Ascent to most high status positions in capitalist societies was not achieved through earned expertise but through inherited symbolic capital in social and cultural forms. The potential profits from these endowments in later life were garnered through privileged access to elite educational institutions; whether the individual accrued intellectual or technical training while attending was a lesser issue in many post-education careers. In fields such as engineering and science, higher education and the legal profession, dominant class members required expertise to gain access to position. But in other fields which conferred status, honour and often financial profit: industry; commerce; the civil

[48] Dan LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy, Mass Communication and the Cultured Mind Between the Wars* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 144.
[49] But not impossible, see career of Arthur Burrows below.

service; the military; the church and in administrational Empire service, the possession of symbolic capital secured the available profits. Reith was unique in possessing a mixture of capitals. He was slightly under-endowed with educational capital – he was not a product of Eton or Harrow, Oxford or Cambridge - but in terms of access to the new field of the BBCo, his professional capital compensated for this deficit. The men who appointed him were dominant class individuals but from its bourgeois industrial fraction. Head of the Manufacturers' Committee was Sir William Noble, its chairman, had a minor public school education at Gordon's College, Aberdeen, before training as an engineer at a Mechanics Institute.[50] But two of them were from one of the most prestigious 'Varsity colleges, Trinity, Cambridge: Alfred Pease, Lord Gainford, a Liberal peer, the son of a baronet and Major Basil Binyon from Radio Communication Company, an electrical engineer.[51] Sir Archibald McKinstry of Metro-Vickers was educated at Larne Grammar School, the Royal Irish University and Queen's University, Belfast.[52] Finally, John Gray, of British Thompson-Houston, chairman of Hotpoint, was an American and his class background is hard to trace.

Reith, then, possessed an habitus recognisable to such men. It was of a distinctive kind, that of a gentleman but one with a pronounced practical personal history. He understood industry, administration, the importance of 'getting things done.' It is hard to imagine Reith not laying down this marker at interview to supplement his written *curriculum vitae* and his references, impeccably marked by the authority of 'great men' of high politics. What Reith lacked was any knowledge of broadcasting. This might make his appointment surprising but Reith's very considerable stock of capital seems clearly to have compensated for this deficiency.

[50] *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History*, last updated March 7, 2015, https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/William_Noble.
[51] *Grace's Guide*, last updated August 19, 2019, https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Basil_Binyon.
[52] *Grace's Guide*, last updated January 10, 2015, https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Archibald_McKinstry.

In objective terms, Noble and the rest of the committee would seem to have been justified in their decision. Reith took a virtually unformed structure, limited by statist restrictions but with a simple criterion for success (selling wireless sets by attracting listeners), and, adopting a philosophy of action in an age which was to become noted for inaction and complacent hesitation, he created a broadcasting machine which rapidly became popular. Within eighteen months Reith had enabled the creation of seventeen stations across Britain, from Plymouth to Aberdeen, Hull to Belfast. In 1925 *The Times* wrote, "The service is barely two years old...and in that short space of time it has established itself firmly as part of the routine of civilisation..."[53] But this achievement was not his alone; it was brought to fruition by the staff subordinate to him and a board of governors which did not restrict him. Reith was given charge of recruitment. Pegg has averred that the BBC "nearly always represented the voice of a ruling élite."[54] It was born, it has been established, as such a creature. The next section examines recruitment practices looking for a pattern and for the influence of ideology, elitist or otherwise.

Building the Staff: A Closed Shop for the Privileged

When John Reith was appointed to the General Manager's position of the new BBCo, he inherited an official staff roster of just four. In reality, as programmes were already being broadcast for a short time each evening, there were more employees than this, but clearly, given the aim of Noble and the rest of the manufacturing committee to create a national broadcasting organisation, bodies would be found to fill a range of roles very quickly. This section of the chapter argues that it was driven largely by the ideology of class.

[53] *The Times*, March 7, 1925, 13.
[54] Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society, 1918-39* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983), 223.

A small number of academics have commented on the class influence on recruitment. Most usefully, Jen Purcell has noted that in the first decade or so a number of people were recruited via "newspaper articles, personal connections and personal encounters."[55] Both Ross McKibbin and Dan LeMahieu assert that Reith's snobbery caused him to decide that ex-public schoolboys and 'Varsity men should near-monopolise key posts.[56] Catherine Murphy has shown, incidentally, that the recruitment of women to non-menial posts was carried out on the basis of seeking dominant class individuals.[57] LeMahieu has recognised Reith's number two, Admiral Charles Carpendale, being deeply concerned with social status in carrying out of the recruitment duties allotted to him by the General Manager.[58] He has also observed the "overwhelming upper-class" status of the Board of Governors – not Reith's doing - while Richard Haynes and Andrew Crisell have noticed the "middle-class" nature of the BBC's producers.[59] Burns has noted the ubiquity of the social class of recruits,[60] Hendy the preponderance of "ex-military types."'[61] Murphy's research on female recruitment has found that by the 1930s senior recruiters were "keen to tempt young female graduates to the staff, as was the case with university men."[62] Murphy has also written that the early BBC's "...structure, its methods of recruitment and its policies on pay and promotion were largely constructed on the hoof." The rest of the chapter empirically tests these assorted views via an examination of the class origins of Reith's appointments and the search for a Reithian methodology of staffing.

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[55] Jennifer Purcell, "Enthusiasm, Experimentation and Gallantry, Developing Light Entertainment on the Fledgling BBC 1922-32," *Cultural and Social History*, 15, no. 3 (2018), 416.
[56] Ross McKibbin, *Class and Cultures, England 1918-51* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 459; LeMahieu, *Culture for Democracy,* 182-3.
[57] Catherine Murphy, "'On an Equal Footing with Men?' Women and Work at the BBC, 1923-1939" (Goldsmiths College, University of London, PhD diss., 2011), 99, 204, 264.
[58] LeMahieu, *Culture for Democracy*, 183. Carpendale joined the BBCo in July 1923.
[59] Richard Haynes, "'Lobby' and the Formative Years of Radio Sports Commentary, 1935 – 52," *Sport in History*, 29, no.1 (March 2009), 25-48; A. Crisell, *Understanding Radio* (London: Routledge, 1994), no page reference given.
[59] Tom Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 39.
[60] Ibid.
[61] David Hendy, "The Great War and British Broadcasting: Emotional Life in the Creation of the BBC," *New Formations*, 82 (Summer 2014), 96.
[62] Murphy, "Equal Footing with Men," 203.

From his first day in the job Reith was granted very considerable executive freedom. He later wrote of an extremely notable meeting with Noble,

> I had thought that the chairman or Sir William Noble might be around a good deal, and when Noble came to see me before the first board meeting on January 4, 1923, I asked him about this. 'Oh, no,' he replied, 'we're leaving it all to you. You'll be responsible at our monthly meetings and we'll see how you're getting on.'[63]

However, this freedom was illusory: from the beginning the extent of Reith's autonomy was limited by a number of factors: the level of ambition of Noble and the committee; the fact that from his first day he began with a group of employees already chosen by the committee; the social structure of the state and a number of unconscious assumptions about employee suitability, doxas, that accompanied it; his own unconscious socially-driven habitus, that of a dominant class male, and by the consequences of this being the first attempt to found a national broadcasting operation with Reith knowing, he said, nothing at all about broadcasting.

The vaulting ambition of the "Big Six" manufacturers and the high expectations that flowed from it were evident in the advertisement for the general manager's position. It was placed in two dominant class newspapers, *The Times* and *Morning Post*. Only those with "first class qualifications" should apply, it stated.[64] Significantly, Noble told Reith during his December 7 interview that "within a short time the general manager would know everybody worth knowing in the country."[65] Not far into the next year he was entertaining the Archbishop of

[63] Reith, *Into the Wind*, 88.
[64] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 117.
[65] Reith, *Into the Wind*, 82.

Canterbury to dinner at his home.[66] The social implications of these comments are considerable. From the outset Noble and probably fellow committee members had already envisioned their monopoly company quickly reaching high national status. Secondly, Reith inherited an organisation already operating in three cities, London, Manchester and Birmingham, initiatives of Marconi, Metropolitan Vickers and the General Electric Company.[67]

Noble's first appointments gave him an initial template to follow: to use individuals who already had broadcasting experience. Many were plucked from Marconi, the most advanced of the three experimenters. The engineers organised the pioneering stations in all respects, not just the technical domain. Engineers required high level education and training. The social structuring of Britain's education system saw 90% of the population receiving no education in science at all.[68] Concomitantly, Britain's cohort of specialist engineers was almost exclusively socially privileged, a high proportion of engineers having attended public schools. Peter Eckersley and Gerald Cock are two BBCo examples. Thus, in terms of non-menial, non-artisanal and non-secretarial staff, Reith's inheritance was a group of men from the social elite almost without exception.

The country's social structure also heavily influenced the recruitment policies Reith decided to adopt in selecting administration and programme building staff, which quickly became systematised. But while this development might appear to be singularly his, Reith's choices were shaped by assumptions about people, singularly and in groups, which in turn were shaped by strands of unconscious 'common sense' thinking attached to dominant class habitus. The most important of these was the belief that the dominant class individual was

[66] Reith, *Into the Wind*, 93.
[67] See Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 82-9.
[68] McKibbin, *Classes & Cultures*, 260.

innately superior to his social inferiors in all matters concerning thought and brain work; in the everyday language of this doxa, 'of course, only the educated classes knew how to do things and how things should be done'. If this were not a powerful enough inducement for Reith to build a staffing policy upon, Noble's founding ambition for the organisation, apparently very willingly embraced or even enhanced by Reith himself, consolidated the idea. For Reith's conception of "communicating from day to day the best of the world's thought, culture, and entertainment" to be sustained, logically his staff was required to be *au fait* with the world of legitimate culture, the natural sciences, history and contemporary intellectual currents. If Reith were planning on output content such as talks on the natural world, then programme builders would have to have scientific knowledge.[69] If military matters were to be broadcast, then some staff from a military background would be highly useful if not essential. And so on. This, ineluctably, would lead him to select educated individuals. For a dominant class member such as Reith, "the best" logically meant those who had been to public schools and the Oxford and Cambridge colleges.

Murphy's assessment, therefore, can be dispensed with in terms of staffing methodology. Rather than creating a policy "on the hoof", Reith acted quickly because of the exigencies of the moment, but from the outset he consistently employed a rational system right through to the end of his tenure in 1938.[70] He claimed to have recruited according to one criterion: that the aspiring individual had to be interested in broadcasting alone. However, this is not accurate.[71] This was simply not possible in the early days when little was known of the medium, and anyway, the proposition was entirely unrealistic given the number of staff required when output expanded in quantity and scope. This section now turns specifically to

[69] *Radio Times*, December 26, 1925, 1, "A New Year Message to Listeners."
[70] Murphy, "Equal Footing with Men," 40.
[71] Reith, *Into the Wind*, 139.

social class and tests the hypothesis made above concerning a “Reithian system” of taking on new staff based on the precise nature of their educational capital.

Firstly, Reith’s inherited London BBCo staff are worthy of further examination. All four of them (Burrows, Jeffries, Anderson and Lewis) - were products of the public school-Oxbridge complex, in Burrows’ case, obliquely. Already on board thanks to Noble's brief pre-Reith foray into staffing were two of a crew of "lively, intelligent and extremely versatile young men" which had earlier in 1921 and 1922 made the first British radio broadcasts from a shed in Writtle, near Chelmsford: Arthur Burrows and L. Stanton Jeffries, brought in as Director of Programmes and Station Musical Director respectively.[72] First company secretary P. F. Anderson FISA's school background is obscure, but as Hennessy meticulously reveals, he was an officer in the Great War, and notably one of the three men who established the Machine Gun Corps. His silk hat also indicates a dominant class background of one fraction or another as well as indicating the tone of even the rough first days of the Company.[73] His successor, Guy V. Rice, had an Oxford, Royal Air Force and chartered accountancy background.

Cecil Lewis's appointment in programme building just below Burrows is an example of peer group recommendation. He was recommended to Noble by Great War and post-war flying ace, C. S. Richards, at that point in a senior position in Metropolitan-Vickers Export Co.[74] He came with the symbolic educational capital of having been educated at Oundle. He joined the war at 16, lying about his age. He also matched the requirements of the 1922-1929 period

[72] Asa Briggs, *The BBC: The First 50 Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 20.
[73] Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting*, 228-229. Though not an academic work, Hennessy's account is essential for the historians of the early BBC, not least for its depth of detail. Ian MacIntyre, *The Expense of Glory* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), 117.
[74] Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting*, 226; Cecil Lewis, *Broadcasting from Within* (London: George Newnes, 1924), 226-7.

where 'Men of the BBC' were enthusiastic, slightly raffish and to use a term much used by contemporaries, "bright".[75]

Arthur Burrows is notable for not having had an elite education, the only example found in this research of this type of BBC employee. He was selected through having quickly become one of broadcasting's first experts. Plucked from his job at the pioneering Marconi, he had already written for *The Times* on the new medium. Burrows's connection to social class was complex, however: he was an elementary schoolboy whose father was a porter at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. His father's father had been a groom. Arthur's access to upper-class accents and mores enabled him to scale the wall, assisted by his sheer ability to master the technical requirements of radio, photography and journalism - he was apprenticed to the *Oxford Times* by virtue of an outstanding report from Oxford Technical College where he took science courses. His cutting edge acumen in the field of the new wireless telephony saw him organising the technology at the first meetings of the League of Nations, for which he was commended. Ironically, in terms of Reith's staff selection methods, Burrows's was the first BBC voice on November 14th 1922.[76] According to his son, his voice, “Classless and devoid of any regional accent...set the standard for 'B.B.C. English'."[77] But it was not classless: if it is true that he set the standard for what became known quasi-formally as ‘B.B.C. English’, slightly more technically, 'received pronunciation', then his voice would emphatically have been that expected of one of the British social élite. Burrows, through his proximity to Cambridge undergraduates, had the means - and clearly the ear - to bring it off. It is with no small amount of irony that he was the first broadcast voice in BBC history.[78]

[75] Cecil Lewis, *Sagittarius Rising* (London: Peter Davies, 1936, 1993 edition, Warner, London).
[76] WAC S236/1-19, 21, Burrows Special Collection.
[77] Ibid., Script of radio talk.
[78] 6 pm, November 15, 1922.

Congruent with the emerging system, Reith's first secretary was a Girton graduate, Miss F. I. Shields."[79] She often wore a monocle and at weekends enjoyed piloting a racing car, a favoured leisure pursuit of a small number of post-war young women from the social elite.[80] The "first class qualifications" criterion was to be applied to female employees too. The next tranche included P. P. Eckersley, an ex-Bedales public schoolboy and ex-RFC pilot, who took up the post of Chief Engineer (in April 1923) and who brought at least four Marconi men with him,[81] and members of General Electric's and Metro-Vickers's broadcasting units which morphed into local BBC stations in Birmingham and Manchester using primarily the same staff.[82]

Marconi's successful experiments from 1920-22 saw several more of their people moving laterally to professional broadcasting and to successful careers. B. N. McClarty became head of BBC Designs and Installation Department, while R. T. B. Wynn went on to become Chief Engineer.[83] To what extent their professional capital secured Reith's approval is not known. Noel Ashbridge, who was to be a long-term BBC employee, was educated at Forest Hill independent school and King's College, London where he obtained an engineering degree, was also taken from Marconi. Stanton Jefferies, one of the first famous BBCo "Uncles" of early children's programming, had been "on the business side" at Marconi but as a graduate of the Royal School of Music, this was his specialty.[84] He was appointed Reith's first director of music. Other early appointees included Herbert Parker, first *Radio Times* joint-editor, who

[79] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 180. Hennessy has her as a graduate of Newnham College, Cambridge.
[80] McIntyre, *Expense of Glory*, 413 n.
[81] P. P. Eckersley, *Power Behind the Microphone*, 56-7.
[82] Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting*, 356.
[83] Aitor Antuaga, *Wireless and Empire, Geopolitics, Radio Industry and Ionosphere in the British Empire, 1918-39* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 91, https://epdf.pub/wireless-and-empire-geopolitics-radio-industry-and-ionosphere-in-the-british-emp.html. Interestingly, according to Antuaga, R.T. Wynn believed BBC engineers "required a recognised university or engineering college training as a condition of appointment," while Peter Eckersley believed that research scientists needed to be equipped with an Oxford or Cambridge degree while those with engineering degrees from "lesser" universities were suited only to "practical" work. This showed Eckersley inclining to the Reithian view of the importance of social capital.
[84] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 80.

had “amongst [his] equipment for this special task of providing an interest for all classes...a Cambridge career, a fine war record, and that special knowledge of the ideals of organised labour, such as might be expected from a nephew of the Right Hon. J. R. Clynes, now Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons.”[85] Walter C Smith was “an old friend of Reith’s Coatbridge days” a graduate from Glasgow University.”[86]

Staffing demands quickly absorbed much of Reith’s time. As output quickly expanded from early 1923 the need to expand the workforce was constant and meant taking on people to make and mediate programmes with no broadcasting experience. With seventeen regional centres and local stations reaching the air by 1925, this reality was heavily accentuated. Broadcasting as a form was uniquely new, so no professional training centres existed from which to draw recruits. In broadcasting and programme-making, and in all decision-making pertinent to both, training would be carried out or happen ‘on the job’.

An indication of the ideology underpinning Reith’s recruitment policy was set out in 1924 with rather feigned innocence – it was the year of the first Labour government – in a hastily written book intended to underline the Company’s early achievements as well as to sketch out Reith’s initial ideology of broadcasting. "In our work,” he wrote, “there is demanded a wider range of qualifications than in any other business. Our people should be of social, educational and business standing.”[87] This position was similarly iterated in a memo sent out sixth months later to his station directors: "Announcers should be men of culture, experience and knowledge, with, *of course*, good articulation and accurate pronunciation."[88] Here are two

[85] Burrows, *Story of Broadcasting*, 141-2.
[86] Burrows, ibid,, 140-1; Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting*, 236.
[87] Reith to Station Directors, 24 June, 1924, quoted in Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 210.
[88] This author’s italics. WAC R34/252, Reith Memos, November 20, 1924.

clear staffing mission statements, even if he failed to keep to the middle of the three forms of capital quoted in the latter.

Given the retarded nature of Britain's education system as far as the mass of the population was concerned, only 14.7% of those born between 1910 and 1929 progressed from elementary to secondary education, such men could only be found emanating from public schools and the ancient universities.[89] If some grammar school products could correct their speech the required RP accent they had to surmount the obstacle of the Reith/Carpendale axis which appeared as much as a screen to keep the socially inferior or unsuitable out as to bring the superior and suitable in. The distinguishing feature of BBC recruitment practices under Reith was his construction of an undisclosed system of the monopolisation of all white collar positions in the company - the executive management, administrational and programme building jobs - by individuals who had been educated either at public schools and their female equivalent, at Oxford and Cambridge colleges (and their female equivalent) or, preferably, both. There were precious few exceptions between the wars. Such as there were inhabited roles which were technical in nature, where the individual concerned had studied at a non-ancient university where the required training was not available (as was usually the case in terms of engineering) or where an outside professional was selected to fulfil an extremely specific function.

Employee and ex-employee memoirs provide ample evidence of the system's existence, through the inclusion of the details of their class origin via parental occupation, their wider family class background and their own education, as well as the disclosure of the purposive nature of that system. They also present a more deeply textured depiction of the general character of the staff. Maurice Gorham, editor of *Radio Times* in the late-1920s and early

[89] McKibbin, *Classes & Cultures*, 260; Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* (London: Penguin, 1968), 141.

1930s, confirmed the prevalence of "the bright young men" from the ancient universities"[90] R. S. Lambert, who came to the BBC in 1927, believed recruits were "picked from the best educated elements of the middle class."[91] Reith, later assisted by his deputy, Admiral Charles Carpendale, who had joined in July 1923, quickly began to systematise recruitment on the basis of admission according to appropriate quantity and quality of symbolic capital. They took on board a plethora of ex-public schoolboys and 'Varsity men, often with a war record to boast of also. Cecil Graves, at his BBC career zenith a temporary Director General during the Second World War (January 1942-September 1943), possessed a huge amount of symbolic capital. He was educated Gresham and Sandhurst and inherited the Falloden estate of his uncle, Viscount Grey, Liberal politician, whose great-grandfather was the younger brother of Earl Grey, Prime Minister of Great Britain, 1830-34.[92] Fellow employee Eric Maschwitz believed that Graves "typified the Public School spirit – with its orthodoxy, urbanity, 'good form', loyalty, and caution..."[93]

Rex Palmer, Reith's first appointment as head of the London station, 2Lo, had served in the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War (renamed "Royal Air Force" in April 1918), bringing military and social capital to an interview that was likely secured through his friendship with Burrows.[94] Educational capital is strongly suggested by his being a graduate in engineering from London University and his being taken on by the RFC.[95] Gladstone Murray was another Great War pilot, a position reserved for dominant class young men, and a Canadian Rhodes Scholar.[96] Both insider and outsider, his intellectual gifts impressed Reith, according to R. S.

[90] Maurice Gorham, *Sound and Fury, Twenty-One Years at the BBC* (London: Percival Marshall, 1948) 15.
[91] Richard Lambert, *Ariel and all his Quality* (London: Gollancz, 1940), 163.
[92] Keith Robbins, "Grey, Edward, Viscount Grey of Falloden," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33570.
[93] Lambert, *Ariel*, 41.
[94] Bonham Auctioneers website, accessed August 30, 2019, https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/16204/lot/374/; Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting*, 245.
[95] Burrows, *Story of Broadcasting*, 142.
[96] Gorham, *Sound & Fury*, 15-17.

Lambert. Reith too was both insider and outsider: a Scot, bold of thought, enemy of English establishment complacency and homosexual, the "Mussolini" who had tried to join the Labour party in 1922.[97]

Most known appointments of the 1920s, however, appear extremely orthodox and consistent with foundation principles. First Head of Outside Broadcasting Gerald Cock, appointed in 1925, was educated at Tonbridge then Seafield Park Engineering College and took a commission in 1915.[98] Cock was exceptional in terms of his wide experience of commerce, like Reith, on both sides of the Atlantic before arriving at Savoy Hill.[99] Stuart Hibberd, who joined the staff in 1926, the most famous BBC announcer of the first two decades – once his identity was allowed to be known - had been to Weymouth College, a lesser public school (after Wimborne Grammar School), before becoming an organ scholar at St. John's, Cambridge. Michael Standing was a product of Charterhouse before going on to Baring's bank.[100] His father, Sir Guy, reached the rank of commander in the Royal Naval reserve during the Great War and was seconded to the Ministry of Information in 1917, suggesting some measure of pre-existing social capital, though his father was a renowned silent film actor. These are just some examples. There are many others.

Interview methods followed a consistent pattern. In front of Carpendale (sometimes Reith) would be a sheet of paper on which were written the candidates personal details: names; date of birth; schools; university; previous employment. Numerous memoirs bear testimony to

[97] Lambert, *Ariel*, 39. Reith's homosexuality is rarely referred to by academics and its repressed nature meant that it was well hidden from future memoirists. Yet his sexuality was made abundantly clear in his unexpurgated diaries (held at WAC) when commenting on his relationship with Charlie Bowser. This was severed not long before Reith's taking up of the general manager position.
[98] See "Seafield Park College , Crofton-on-the-Solent, Fareham, Hants," *The Nineteen Century Advertiser*, October 1906, http://octopus.library.cmu.edu/Collections/carnegie_mbw/box00001/fld00026/bdl0001/doc0001/00000022.pdf for its preparation classes for the Indian Civil Service and Oxford Mechanical Sciences Tripos.
[99] Gerald Cock Staff File at WAC.
[100] Gerald Cock and Michael Standing staff files at WAC.

this. "It was asked of every applicant for a responsible job in the B.B.C., 'Is he a gentleman?" according to P. P. Eckersley.[101] Lionel Fielden represented the ideal BBC type. According to a fellow worker, he "...concealed a formidable and cultivated intelligence behind a deceptive Etonian-cum-Regency *façade*."[102]

Memoirs prove that Admiral Charles Carpendale played a dominant role in most of the appointments below senior level, which came under the direct aegis of Reith himself. They pursued different approaches according to one staff member. "In interviewing for senior posts, whilst Sir John would play the psychologist, the Admiral used to concern himself with the social qualifications of the candidates – whether they came from the right type of Public School, and had influential 'connexions' or not."[103] Sometimes the meeting could be avoided, as it was by Val Gielgud: "Not for me the ordeal of an interview with Admiral Carpendale, the Deputy Director-General, with his formidable reputation of a quarter-deck manner and brusque questioning about one's public school and one's athletic achievements."[104]

John Snagge, an important Outside Broadcasting producer from the mid-1920s and from the mid-1930s resident commentator on the Boat Race for over forty years, applied in 1924. A product of Winchester and Pembroke College, Oxford until he quit at an early stage of his undergraduate career, his letter of application indicated an assumed importance of social capital: "Sir, I desire to apply for a post on the staff of the British Broadcasting Co. I am a son of His Honour Judge Snagge, am twenty years of age..."[105] On this letter is pencilled by Carpendale, "Seen, No particular qualifications. Winchester and [illegible, possibly his

[101] P. P. Eckersley, *Power Behind the Microphone*, 179.
[102] Val Gielgud, *Years in a Mirror* (London: Bodley Head, 1965), 50.
[103] Lambert, *Ariel*, 27.
[104] Gielgud, *Years in a Mirror*, 48.
[105] John Snagge Staff File at WAC.

college name] Oxford, no degree." Scrawled at an angle in the margin is written “Well connected,” proof of the power of symbolic capital in recruitment practices.

A further weeding-out process involved the issue of character and politics. Maurice Gorham, a "shy, smouldering Irishman," was a product of the elite Jesuit school, Stonyhurst, and Balliol, Oxford. Later of his 1926 interview with Carpendale he wrote,

> “So far as I remember he began something like this: ‘You’re a journalist. I don’t want to know anything about that. Fuller and Murray [editor and assistant-editor respectfully of *Radio Times*] understand all that sort of thing. What I want to find out is *what sort of fellow you are.* What did you do in the war?” I explained that I had stayed at school, being 16 when it stopped. ’What did you do in the strike?’’[106]

This inquiry into character was made via questions about the interviewee’s involvement first in the Great War, then the General Strike. Both are tests of loyalty to a patriot’s conception of citizenship; they have a coded, pregnant meaning containing the question: "Can we rely on him politically?" Where academic commentators write critically of the class bias in the selection of BBC staff they tend to ignore the zeitgeist of the post-war period where the rise of Communism in Europe caused real anxiety to upholders of the socio-political status quo. The 1926 General Strike in early May brought this to a head. To those of a conservative cast it represented as an assault on the British constitution which held in place the hegemony of the moneyed and landed classes. Carpendale’s line of interrogation is striking for its political content, and in contemporary terms, its moral content.

[106] Gorham, *Sound & Fury*, 48.

Though Carpendale's astringent cross-examinations of potential employees was meant to test the candidate's mental strength as well as to divine their social background and political attitude, personal whim or judgement determined the result. The recruitment system was not one of bureaucratic standardisation. Gorham, provoked by Carpendale's interrogation into his actions during the General Strike, told the Admiral he had done nothing. Enabled by his considerable educational capital he was offered the job of Assistant Editor of *Radio Times*.[107]

Entering the field could be a simple matter if you were connected to those who shared the habitus of the privileged class already working at Savoy Hill. Staffer Lancelot de Giberne Sieveking, also in 1926, traces the addition of another BBC drone to the strength:

> I hadn't seen Eric Maschwitz for a long time when I ran into him in the Strand. He looked very shabby and rather depressed. I noticed he was wearing cracked patent-leather shoes. Seeing my glance he said: 'My other shoes are out at the toes.' I told him I was working at the new Broadcasting Company, and they were on the look-out for bright young men. Next afternoon I had no difficulty in getting him an interview with Mr. Reith, who took him on to the staff. A week later Eric was with Walter Fuller as a sub-editor on the *Radio Times*...[108]

Broke as Maschwitz was at the time - he was married to a struggling actress Hermione Gingold who also lacked pecuniary support from the family - he could tell Reith if required that at Cambridge, going up after Repton, he frequently played tennis with the future George VI and his brother, the Duke of Gloucester.[109]

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[107] Ibid., 13-14.
[108] WAC S61 ASOLS, Lancelot Sieveking, Autobiographical Sketches of Lance Sieveking, 43.
[109] Eric Maschwitz, *No Chip On My Shoulder* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1957), 26.

Another example of even stronger insider advantage was Roger Eckersley, brother of Peter, by 1923 firmly established as Chief Engineer. After Charterhouse public school he wrote dance tunes (some of which were published), tried a little stockbroking, then trained to be a golf secretary working under a golf architect, H. S. Colt, and got a job at Littlehampton in 1913. He spent the war in the Foreign office as a clerk, and then took up chicken farming. His farm failing financially, Peter suggested he go for a job as an announcer. Interviewed by Carpendale he undertook a voice test, was offered a position but refused.[110] But his farm sinking financially, he began a job at the Company in February 1924 "in a new blue suit and a bowler hat."[111] Another to enter Savoy Hill via the same route was Val Gielgud in 1928, mentioned above: “Lance Sieveking urged my intelligence upon Roger Eckersley, at that time Director of Programmes. Eric Maschwitz murmured of my merits in the ear of Gladstone Murray, Director of Public Relations...I was at the time an actor out of work...Apart from having given a couple of talks; I had no experience of broadcasting.”[112] "Jack" R. C Stobart, became Reith’s first Education Director in 1924. He was not only a Rugby and Trinity-educated “cultured gentleman,” according to Lambert; he had taken a Cambridge MA before studying further in Germany and Edinburgh and had taught at the Merchant Taylor's School.[113] He was attached to the War Cabinet in 1917, went on to lecture at Trinity and became an H.M. Inspector of Schools.[114]

Clearly the friendship nexus could be a powerful one but at work here was friendship plus shared social class - Harmon Grisewood: Ampleforth and Worcester College, Oxford; Eric Maschwitz: Repton and Gonville and Caius, Cambridge; Val Gielgud, Rugby and Trinity, Oxford. It was the combined power of the two factors that made their entry possible. The

[110] Roger Eckersley, *The B.B.C and All That* ([S.I.]: Sampson Low, Marston & Co Ltd, 1946), 47.
[111] Ibid., 55-56.
[112] Gielgud, *Years in a Mirror*, 48.
[113] Lambert, *Ariel*, 39.
[114] Ibid., 49. "Stobart...a public schoolboy and a cultured gentleman."

friendship route to a position was not just a perk of the privileged classes. From an early stage of industrial development in Britain this was an extremely common method of employers taking on workers - especially in unskilled occupations - particularly in economic boom times when labour was scarce. It may not have been the most effective way of staffing a mine, a factory or a workshop, but it was uncomplicated, quick and cheap. If the rapidly-expanding enterprise of the BBC saw loose bodies taken on board freely if they were gentlemen and well-connected, the policy was driven by the belief that those who had been bred through a system held up as the best the country had to offer could be moulded for many positions. This Reithian system seems to have extended to some low level positions. For a number of years, the Savoy Hill lift man was an ex-policeman.[115] When left-wing dramatist Joan Littlewood managed to procure a lunch with John Coatman, Manchester's director to discuss working there, she noted *en passant*, "The lift-men were all ex-army sergeants with authentic British Army accents."[116]

Exclusion evidence is rare but R. S. Lambert's memoir contains an illuminating narrative of Reith' refusal of an applicant who came down from Glasgow for an interview in 1927. Despite possessing an outstanding set of qualifications - "all manner of prizes...a first-class honours degree...offered a fellowship at an Oxford College…" - he did not possess the correct form of social capital for Reith. Most telling, if Lambert's testimony is accurate, is the contempt which Reith and Carpendale exhibited towards the young aspirant.

> A day or two later, I heard from the chief protagonists how he had been handled and why turned down. "I sized him up at once,' said Sir John shrewdly, 'as a type of young Scottish nobody. He had a fine opinion of himself; which I think I lowered a

[115] Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting*, 4, quoting Gorham, *Sound & Fury*, 24.
[116] Joan Littlewood, *Joan's Book, The Autobiography of Joan Littlewood*, (London: Methuen, 1994) 116.

> bit.' But Admiral Carpendale was more illuminating. 'About that fellow you sent in to me the other day,' he began. 'He talked big to me about his achievements and his prospects, said he had done this, that and the other at Glasgow and that he had been offered a 'fellowship' at Oxford, Well, I wouldn't let him get away with that! I told him, we took no stock of 'fellowships' here; that they were three-a-penny anyway; and that he would get no bigger salary at Savoy Hill because of it…By the way,' went on the Admiral reflectively, 'what *is* a 'fellowship'?' I explained – also reflectively."[117]

Briggs argues that many of the memoirs were written by rebels who had left the organisation (though not Sieveking). But it is arguably the recalcitrant who is the most likely to reveal the 'true' nature of the machine, rather than the comfortable conformists who will tend to hide its true nature.[118] Furthermore, Briggs is not quite accurate. People such as Lance Sieveking, Maurice Gorham and Richard Lambert had a long, successful BBC career and one 'rebel', P. P. Eckersley who was forced to leave, wrote glowingly of Reith's achievement in his 1941 volume.[119] Lionel Fielden's iconoclasm did not prevent his memoir from containing much valuable information.[120]

A public school and 'Varsity education was no guarantee of a conservative set of dispositions. A BBC apprehended by contemporaries as an organisation of the social elite largely producing programmes for the privileged classes did not mean that radicals did not seek – and gain - employment there. Lionel Fielden gained his entry to the BBC via his connections to Philip Noel Baker, a dominant class figure on the left, which led to a

[117] Lambert, *Ariel*, 27-8.
[118] Briggs, *Golden Age of Wireless*, 14.
[119] P. P. Eckersley, *Power Behind the Microphone*, 61. "Sir John Reith made the B.B.C. so we all owed him a great deal."
[120] Jocelyn Zivin, "Bent: A Colonial Subversive and Indian Broadcasting," *Past & Present*, 162 (February, 1999), 195-220.

recommendation to Reith and Carpendale from Head of Talks Hilda Mathieson. Despite objections by Carpendale who rejected Fielden as an announcer, the latter joined the staff.[121] His Eton and Oxford education and some time spent at the Foreign Office signal a key common denominator of so many entrants to the Corporation. R. S. Lambert, who joined in 1927, believed he may have been accepted only because Carpendale was absent the day he came to interview for an education department job. "This was a singular occurrence. Had I met the Admiral, he certainly would have elicited the facts about my pacifist attitude during the War…" These, he knew, may have seen him turned down. Lambert attended Repton and Wadham College, Oxford.

Guy Burgess, employed by the BBC as an assistant talks producer from 1936 is a special example of a dissenter from establishment conservatism. He defected to the Soviet Union in 1951 after being recruited as a spy while at Cambridge; his recruitment by the BBC followed a normative pattern. His referee was G. M. Trevelyan, the esteemed historian. He wrote,

> I believe a young friend of mine, Guy Burgess…is applying for a post in the B.B.C. He was in the running for a Fellowship in History, but decided (correctly I think) that his bent was for the great world - politics, journalism, etc - and not academic. He is a first rate man, and I advise you if you can to try him. He has passed through the communist measles that so many of our clever young men go through, and is well out of it. There is nothing second rate about him and I think he would prove a great addition to your staff.[122]

[121] In 1957 Gerald Cock described Fielden as "the man who has done everything." Lionel Fielden, *The Natural Bent* (London: Deutsch, 1960), 102-3.
[122] Guy Burgess Staff File at WAC. Burgess's reference from Trevelyan was "passed on by Graves to C (A) Carpendale."

Burgess's Eton and Trinity, Cambridge education was clearly a factor in his employment. That said, Burgess, despite his educational and social capital, was admitted to the organisation on his third attempt. His file does not contain information explaining why.

The first two cases noted above suggest most strongly that Reith was content for a small number of left individuals to come on to the staff, either in the name of balance or through the complexity of a psyche which contained transgressive socio-political elements, however conflicting that may appear. However, his failure to support his earlier protégé, Hilda Mathieson, over a controversy surrounding her advocacy of broadcasting modernist literature suggests that Reith was becoming rather reactionary at the turn of the 1920s. Given the fact that from 1932 the BBC deployed a systematic policy of keeping out known Communists and other leftists in cahoots with MI5, this view may seem suspect. However, the experience of Joseph McLeod in 1938 (see below) suggests a very human inconsistency of approach.[123] The reasons for this are moot. Had Reith wanted to completely exclude all left-wing individuals from the staff the evidence suggests he clearly could have done much more to bring this about. He seems rather to have consolidated the balance of power in a conservative direction, the replacement of the somewhat liberal Charles Siepmann with the more conservative Sir Richard Maconachie (Tonbridge and University College, Oxford) in 1935 being one major example. A new senior position for Colonel Dawnay in 1933 provides another.[124] Less is known of such ideological strategies in the regional stations, but Joan Littlewood has written of her radical approach to drama at the Manchester station caused her to be sidelined after initial acceptance. The topic of dominant class individuals acting against type at the inter-war BBC requires more research. This brief sidebar can only act to point out

[123] Sanchia Berg, "Was There a Communist Witch-Hunt at the BBC?" *BBC News Magazine*, January 26, 2016.
[124] The Peerage website, "Col. Alan Dawnay," last edited October 9, 2009, http://www.thepeerage.com/p6169.htm#i61690.

that a public school education, though it bred 'gentlemen' imbued with the features of habitus attached to that class, was not a guarantee of attachment to conservative politics. However, the case of Fielden is instructive. An iconoclast contemptuous of the normative worldview of the reactionary imperialist, when he became Controller of the All-India Broadcasting in 1935, leaving the BBC behind, he reverted very easily to the elitism of the public school type.[125]

Reith's ambiguous positions on social and political issues are also visible in his attitude to gender and recruitment. In this area he was at times bold in placing women in quite senior positions, at others timid, as when enforcing female staff to leave the organisation when marrying, as Murphy has also shown in both instances.[126] The three most significant females in the inter-war history of the organisation were Hilda Matheson, Mary Somerville and Isa Benzie. Their addition to the staff was carried out according to the Reithian system also. Somerville, the BBC's first female producer, was an Oxford graduate. Matheson, who was appointed by Reith as head of a new designated Talks Department in late-1926, had been a home student at Oxford University. Her stock of symbolic capital was also boosted by her previous job as personal secretary to Lady Astor. Matheson was also recommended to Reith by Somerville who was then a senior officer in the early Education Department. When Matheson required "a frightfully intelligent young woman of robust and excellent judgement," her lover, the author Vita Sackville-West advised her to contact Girton College, Cambridge and Somerville College, Oxford for recommendations; it resulted in the appointment of Marjorie Wace, an Oxford graduate.[127] Isa Benzie, a Foreign Director in 1933 was the daughter of an army colleague of Reith's and another Oxford graduate.[128] The staff

[125] Zivin, "Bent: A Colonial Subversive," 208-10.
[126] For the marriage bar, see Murphy, "Equal Footing with Men," Chapter Three.
[127] Ibid., 260-2, 264-5.
[128] Ibid., 273, 290.

notes on Jasmine Lydia Bligh, one of the first television announcers in 1936, exemplify BBC priorities in meeting new candidates:

> Educated Farlington House, Haywards Heath...speaks French, plays piano, loads of sports and "Three years stage and film experience both in straight and musical plays". Met Cock and Eckersley who were "very favourably impressed" on meeting her. 11 Dec 1935.[129]

Whether she alluded to her family connection to the 9th Earl of Darney is not included in her staff file.

The employment of Hilda Matheson is of special interest, her being the first woman to be given a high-ranking position at the BBC. Its anomalousness is striking even when the fact is considered that she brought an immense amount of social and cultural capital to the organisation. Her father was a chaplain to Oxford undergraduates and she had studied as one of the Oxford Home Students before working as secretary to H. A. L. Fisher at New College, Oxford and at the Ashmolean museum. When Reith, who knew her socially, offered her the position she had just left a position as secretary to Lady Nancy Astor, Unionist MP and the husband of Viscount Astor, an American born British parliamentarian who had been ennobled in 1916 by his friend, the PM Lloyd George. Matheson's loss of position in 1931 was caused by Reith's resistance to modernism in the arts, which adds to her being at odds with the supposed traditional and culturally reactionary BBC of the period. Her initial gaining of position may have been due to Reith's occasional attention to his own atypicality. Whether Matheson's lesbianism was a significant mirror to Reith's homosexuality cannot be explored

[129] Jasmine Lydia Bligh Staff File at WAC.

for want of evidence, but without the matter being raised, the danger of the misrepresentation of Reith as a monolithic traditionalist and authoritarian is increased.[130]

Murphy has found further evidence of the class-based nature of recruitment criteria which corroborate the findings on Reith's vision for the creation of a BBC ideal type. She found that "all secretarial recruits were required to have a good general education coupled with a high standard of shorthand and typing."[131] She also found that the middle-class Hilary Cope Morgan was interviewed for a secretarial post in 1939 and questioned about her interests and background including whether she had played hockey or lacrosse at school. She found that "By the 1930s, the Corporation was keen to tempt young female graduates to the staff, as was the case with university men."[132] She also found that Barker and Mair's 1934 internal staffing report raised concerns regarding the fact that Cambridge and Oxford Universities were being approached to recommend candidates for weekly-paid posts, stifling career opportunities for existing staff who lacked comparable symbolic capital.[133] There can be no doubt that policies emanating from Reith's class-based conception of how a "first class" organisation should be constructed were applied to the recruitment of women in non-menial positions, just as they were applied to men. Given Reith's history of rational management and administration techniques, this is not a surprise.

The directors of outlying stations were interviewed in London too, but with local considerations in mind where the north of England and Scotland were concerned. The class background of some of the regional station directors of the 1920s is hard to pin down for

[130] Victoria Glendinning, *Vita: The Life of Vita Sackville-West* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 208-10; Fred Hunter, 'Matheson, Hilda (1888-1940)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (May 2012), https://www.oxforddnb.com/search?q=Hilda+Matheson&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true.
[131] Murphy, "Equal Footing with Men," 96.
[132] Ibid., 95-6, 98, 203.
[133] WAC R49/31/1, Staff Policy Appointments Procedure 1925-39: Report on Recruitment of Staff, Ernest Barker to John Reith, February 8, 1934; Murphy, "Equal Footing with Men," 98.

want of biographical information, but, where this is missing, their stock of educational capital can be inferred from adult career data. Recruitment followed the template established in London. In 1924 *Radio Times* included a regular feature on their Station Directors.[134] Basil Nichols (Manchester), E. R. Appleton (Cardiff), Major A. Corbett Smith (Cardiff), Edward Living (Nottingham) and Regional Scottish Director David Cleghorn Thompson had all been up at the 'Varsity. A. E. Carruthers (Glasgow) had attended an Edinburgh public school. Others without such an elite education such as Eric Heddie (Dundee) and Neal McClean (Aberdeen) could still bring levels of educational capital to qualify for dominant class categorisation. D. Miller Craig, Scottish Regional Controller had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. Military and professional capital were also in evidence in his case. Manchester's Assistant-Director, B. H. Goldsmith, had a Royal Navy background. Bertram Fryer, director of the Newcastle and Bournemouth stations had spent five years with his father on the Stock Exchange. Aberdeen's director, R. E. Jeffrey, had been an actor, producer, author and lecturer in public speaking at Glasgow University. Such appointments followed Reith's stated belief that Station Directors required "an exceptional range of qualifications...diversity of gifts....but the same spirit."[135] This policy almost completely excluded socially upwardly mobile men such as Arthur Burrows. Only dominant class members had access to the required educational capital in music and the arts to be worthy of consideration for this particular role in the organisation. Outsiders would have lacked the "same spirit" inculcated through the universally taught hidden curriculum contents of the public schools.

[134] Almost all the biographical data in this paragraph sourced from *Radio Times*. For Cleghorn Thompson, see https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/oxford-poetry-1923-signed-graham-1899398111.
[135] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 210, quoting Reith, *Broadcasting Over Britain*, 34-5.

The system continued into the 1930s. In researching the possibility of change, the available evidence, in the BBC's documents or in the secondary literature, does not throw up a single example of a white-collar recruit entering the institution without the symbolic educational capital which had been required since the appointment of Reith. The Talks department took on Seymour Joly de Lotbinière in 1932, an Etonian and 'Cambridge man. John Green joined the same department in 1934. His staff file omits his schooling but does record his having been to Peterhouse, Cambridge. Sir Stephen Tallents, Harrow and Balliol, joined in 1935 as Controller of Public Relations. Also during 1934, the failure to find a suitable number of applicants for a number of posts led the BBC to contact the Oxford and Cambridge University Recruitment boards as well as the universities of London and Birmingham to try to solve the problem. Richard Dimbleby, a Mill Hill School product, joined the News Division in 1936. Sir Richard Maconachie, who had attended Tonbridge and University College, Oxford, was recruited from the civil service to head the Talks Department in 1936 after a turbulent period which began with the modernism controversy which caused the resignation of Hilda Matheson in 1931. John Coatman, taken on at the Manchester station was appropriately educated at the Manchester Grammar School before taking a BA from Manchester University. He gained an MA subsequently from Oxford. Though Reith wrote in *Broadcast over Britain* of the great importance of "imagination" in those responsible for programme making, it seems clear that far more important than this was social capital of the educational kind.

One whose employment story is of paramount value is that of Seymour Joly de Lotbinière who joined the staff in 1932 because it reveals a direct connection between the BBC recruiters, in this case Talks head Charles Siepmann, and Oxford and Cambridge universities. In recruiting Lotbinière, Siepmann wrote him, "Your name has been mentioned to me by Mr

C. V. Guy of the Cambridge Appointments Board in connection with possible vacancies on our staff here in the Talks branch."[136] Siepmann himself was an early BBC archetype. After garnering a fine military record, winning the Military Cross in 1916, he joined the Company as an Education Department assistant.[137] Trinity economist Dennis Robertson warmly supported Lotbinière's candidacy, resulting in an interview. After a tortuous process during which de Lotbinière impressed, his symbolic capital recognized but not thought to have the imagination required of a Talks position, he was taken on. Most significantly, Siepmann wrote to Robertson, "If you should have anyone else in mind it would be very helpful to have recommendations from you." The evidence is crystal clear: not only did the BBC, through to the early 1930s, *like* taking on 'Varsity candidates, they actively and directly sought them out. Siepmann's additional comment, "There is always room for really good men here," is striking in illustrating the mutual recognition of habitus and the ease with which it enabled those with the required capital to enter the game.[138] Murphy has found considerations of social class in recruiting staff much further down the hierarchical chain. The staffing of the catering department in the mid-1930s showed that the BBC liked to employ "a decent class of girl" as the Corporation strove to "project probity and decorum."[139] The second decade of the period was notable for the BBC's expansion, bureaucratisation and "playing safe". In staffing, a slight transmutation of "first class" to "respectability and decorum" took place, quintessential middle-class qualities of the period.

[136] Siepmann-Robertson correspondence, Seymour Joly de Lotbinière staff file at WAC.
[137] Victor Pickard, "Charles Siepmann: A Forgotten Pioneer of Critical Media Policy Research," in *International Histories of Communication Study*, ed. David Park and Peter Simonson (New York: Routledge, 2015), https://www.academia.edu/16384799/Charles_Siepmann_A_Forgotten_Pioneer_of_Critical_Media_Policy_Research.
[138] See Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology,* 19.
[139] WAC R49/56/1: Recruitment of Staff: 1929-1940, Wade to Nicolls, January 11, 1934, quoted in Murphy, "Equal Footing with Men," 125.

This is well illustrated by the experience of Jean Metcalfe in seeking longed-for employment at Broadcasting House in 1939. At her interview with Miss Cockle for a job "in the typing pool in the general office" and believing female employees to be the daughters of successful professional men, this daughter of a railway clerical worker masked her lower middle-class status using the elocution lessons she was given at grammar school and quick wittedness to falsify the social class of her family. Her father became a welfare officer, her great-grandfather, taking the place of her grandfather, became a doctor – "I moved him up a generation..." – and she gave her home – "I see you live in the country" - an orchard. "Miss Cockle took off her glasses and welcomed me into the fold of the British Broadcasting Corporation."[140]

Thus by the end of the period, Reithian staffing methodology was still intact. In a book from the inside, published in 1938, S. W. Smithers described announcers as being recruited "through the B.B.C.'s file, through learned societies, Government departments, universities, training colleges, and innumerable private 'contacts.'"[141] According to Scannell and Cardiff, in 1938, the News Department's senior staff consisted of experienced newspapermen but its junior staff consisted largely of recruits from the 'Varsity.[142] Kenneth Adam, for example attended Nottingham High School (founded 1513) and St. John's, Cambridge. R. T. Clark was a "military historian and classical scholar"[143]

Joseph McLeod's personal BBC biography – his left wing politics – places him in the 'rebel' category. He applied for a position at Broadcasting House in 1938 and was already known to the organisation having previously made some talks. His 1947 memoir illustrates both the

[140] Cliff Michelmore and Jean Metcalfe, *Two-Way Story* (London: Hamilton, 1986), 24.
[141] S. W. Smithers, *Broadcasting from Within* (London: Pitman & Sons, 1938), from "Schools Broadcasting" chapter, page number not available.
[142] Scannell & Cardiff, *Social History of British*, 120-21.
[143] Tim Crook, *International Radio Journalism (Communication and Society)* (London: Routledge, 1997), 102.

factual continuity of the symbolic capital imperative and the tone of the BBC's institutional practices.

> The G.E.O [General Establishment Officer] sat, grey and dignified, beneath an enormous desk... 'Well,' he said...'perhaps I had better make a note of your qualifications...What was your public school?' I laughed amiably, not expecting such humour from a B.B.C. official – until I realised he was perfectly serious."[144]

Clearly, the Reithian system of recruitment was still in place as war approached: McLeod was taken on to the staff. In his 1941 memoir Peter Eckersley, though having been forced out of the organisation by Reith on account of being cited in a divorce case, wrote extremely favourably of Reith. He also asseverated that in his time the BBC was "...more like a public school than a public service,"[145] The new 1938 Director-General, Frederick Ogilvie, a sober academic brought in from Queen's University, Belfast, did not alter the Reithian system and there is no evidence that he had any interest in doing so.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter section it was argued that Reith's freedom to invent a personal recruitment strategy was limited. As we have seen, if he was innovative at all it was in consolidating dominant class power in this new institution. This need not be seen in a sinister or conspiratorial light. If we allow the BBC to be compared with two other fields during the period, the civil service and large corporations such as ICI, Reith's system seems merely to have copied their template. Given Reith's connections to government departments and industrial management, he may well have done. There is just no evidence that he did. However, the BBC was not a directly comparable institution. Its primary purpose was to

[144] Joseph McLeod, *A Job at the BBC (some reminiscences)* (London: McLellan, 1947), 30.
[145] P. P. Eckersley, *Power Behind the Microphone*, 172.

make media product. From the outset, some of this consisted of material purely for entertainment purposes, making this particular institution unique. Reith's staffing philosophy, however, appears to have been every bit as ideological as that in the civil service and at large private corporations. In the cleavage created by the unique purpose of the BBC is Reith's freedom of action. It might easily be argued, for example, that it was irrational – and Reith thought himself a rationalist – for the BBC to make entertainment programmes without their being made, to at least some extent, by entertainers or those responsible for organising it. Reith far preferred Oxbridge graduates or ex-public schoolboys with no experience of entertainment or journalism, or indeed, experience of anything at all in the adult economy. Reith's intensity of purpose in terms of the BBCs achieving excellence, in part necessary for its survival in his terms, did much to maintain the early system. If this indeed appears odd, it can be explained by Bourdieu.

Reith fiercely adopted an ideologically-driven methodology concomitant with his dominant class status and many indices of its habitus. In doing so he was following the deeply implanted pre-determined, pre-structured inclinations of his social class. For Bourdieu the formation of habitus took place in the family but it was restructured or transformed by the action of a school: "...the habitus transformed by the action of the school...is in turn at the basis of all subsequent experiences...[146] For a public school product such as Reith it was utterly rational of him to base a recruitment system, the basis of the culture and character of the BBC itself, on the ex-public schoolboy.

Within these confines of his social class position there was room for Reith's personality and personal choices to have their effect. A comment from Maurice Gorham is telling in this

[146] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 87, n, 133-4; Pierre Bourdieu, *D'esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique. Précédé de trois etudes d'ethnologie Kabyle*: (Genéve: Droz, 1977), 188.

respect: "Personally, I believe that Reith suffered increasingly from a sub-conscious horror lest the listener should have too good a time. Giving pleasure to the ungodly was not amongst his objectives for the BBC. If they liked it too much, it could not be doing its job."[147] Though he would have known that the dominant class was not a repository of saints, Reith trusted the habitus of the English gentleman class: their sense of honour, the virtues of amateurism with which they had been imbued in their schools, the knowledge of correct manners, even if they sometimes broke them, their dress, their deportment and their manner in which they spoke.

The numbers of working-class and petty-bourgeois youngsters going on to take degrees were so tiny in the early twentieth century that the white collar staff of the BBCs could not have avoided being composed of dominant class individuals, in mainstream terminology, 'middle-class', of whatever stratum. Reith's imprint on this inevitable structural fact was to eschew an attempt to widen opportunity for aspiring individuals from the petite bourgeoisie or the working class in a response to the implicit demands of the new age of universal suffrage which produced minority Labour governments in 1923 and 1929. Reith's refusal of this was absolute. Instead, he cemented the hegemony of the dominant class at the BBCs by instituting a sharply defined system of selection by educational capital possession.

The descriptions of the institution as a gentleman's club, a public school, a place where an ethos of "under-housemaid snobbery" held sway are powerful depictions of the inter-war BBC. In terms of force these fall short of George Orwell's 1941 acidic, perhaps flippant but thought-provoking description of Broadcasting House as "something half-way between a

[147] Gorham, *Sound & Fury*, 59.

girls' boarding school and a lunatic asylum."[148] Views of a more democratically inclined institution are not easy to find.

An endnote on recruitment: in outlining the rigorousness to near rigidity of Reith's system it is possible to lose sight of the reality of everyday life, something Bourdieu was passionately intent on revealing in his work. Maurice Gorham, a BBC employee from 1926 to 1941, described the atmosphere at the BBCs as "corrupt." "I never knew a place," he testified, "where so many people lived with their secretaries, where the hunters and the hunted were so conspicuous as they went about their sport."[149] Of his 1920s colleagues he wrote that,

> Quite a lot of them had suffered shell-shock...This made dealings with them rather precarious; you never quite knew how they would react. And quite a lot of them drank. Despite the puritanical reputation of that early BBC, there were always some of my colleagues with whom it was never safe to do any business after lunch.[150]

Hendy has described its staff as "slightly damaged souls and misfits, nervous about their own states of mind and the fragility of society, trying to pull themselves together - and in doing so, trying, whether misguidedly or not, to bring stability to the world around them."[151] When considering Reith's much-mentioned determination to give the audience, "the best of everything" it is important to consider that the lived experience of the people who made the programmes did not match the implied moral superiority of a staff constructed according to high levels of social and cultural capital, in Reith's words, those of "social and educational standing." In the systematising and social structuring of sociologists and sociological theory,

[148] George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell, 2. My Country Right of Left, 1940-43* (London: Penguin, 1970), 322.
[149] Gorham, *Sound & Fury*, 20.
[150] Ibid.,16.
[151] Hendy, "The Great War," 99.

substantive everyday realities such as these must be allowed to play their part in the procedures of intellectual examination and analysis. The deduction that the BBCs formed a closed shop for the privileged opens up British inter-war society to substantial questions about the basis upon which social inequality rested and the justifications offered for it by dominant class commentators.

Chapter Two: BBC Sports Mediators and Social Class, 1923-29

> "As we conceive it, our responsibility is to carry into the greatest possible number of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement, and to avoid the things which are, or may be, hurtful."[1] John Reith

> "Despite the politically independent, public service status which it resolutely defended, the social composition of its employees and speakers meant that the BBC nearly always represented the voice of a ruling elite when it transmitted to an audience."[2] Mark Pegg

Historians on Inter-war BBC Mediators

In the concluding section of the previous chapter it was suggested that a "Reithian System" of staff recruitment existed through his period at the apex of the BBC order.[3] We have also seen that Reith was far from being able to create a BBC in the image of his own tastes and predilections from a clean slate. As Mugglestone has pointed out, the organisation which he shaped and directed "was to intersect with a number of pre-established cultural agendas which would critically influence both the matter – and the manner – of broadcasting."[4] This was the case "culturally and linguistically" through Reith's ideal type of employee. This chapter tests the extent to which the dominant class ideology and philosophy which influenced Reith and shaped his staffing policy also extended to practical policy in terms of one segment of its content: sport. That BBC radio sport can be treated itself as a field in Bourdieusian terms is the approach taken here. Within this field are sub-fields, the most notable of which for the purposes of this chapter is that of the sports mediator. In the sub-

[1] John Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), 34.
[2] Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society 1918-39* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983), 223.
[3] Theoretically, Reith seemed to be answerable to the BBC Governors and, somewhat at arms' length, the Postmaster General, the minister nominally responsible for the public corporation after 1926.
[4] Lynda Mugglestone, "Spoken English and the BBC," *AAA – Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Band 33* _ Heft 2, Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen, (2008), 198.

field of sports output, an administrator such as head of a department or producer, selected individuals to talk about, report and commentate on sport according to the ideology of Reithianism in which they were schooled as BBC members of staff.

The literature on sports mediators during this period follows the same pattern as that for BBC radio sport discussed in the introductory chapter. The same academics have agreed that class membership was an important factor in sports broadcaster choice. Mike Huggins suggests that the cohort of mediators "were largely male sports journalists, former top amateur players and administrators, a fairly homogeneous group, almost all 'gentlemen' in terms of education (generally public school and university), social background and attitudes. Any detailed sporting knowledge was derived from their fairly upper middle-class backgrounds."[5] This chapter will investigate these assertions. In a work acutely conscious of sport as a socially embedded practice, Huggins and Jack Williams in *Sport and the English* re-assert this analysis, stating that BBC commentators were "strong individuals, usually public school – or Oxbridge-educated and almost all men."[6] This is consolidated by their also noting commentators' "respect for tradition and authority, conservatism, and amateur sportsmanship..." They also argue that "The BBC searched hard for talented, expert commentators..." Here, however, they do not include the influence of class on commentator choice, opening up the productive question of how strong class attachment was as a motive force compared with the search for expertise and talent. This is one of the questions this chapter aims to answer.

Richard Haynes's assessment of the subject essentially supports Huggins's findings, arguing in his substantial essay on key 1930s staff member Seymour Joly de Lotbinière, head of the

[5] Mike Huggins, "BBC Radio Sport 1922-39," *Contemporary British History*, 21, no.4 (December 2007), 507.
[6] Mike Huggins and Jack Williams, *Sport and the English, 1919-39* (London: Routledge, 2006), 38.

Outside Broadcasting department from 1935 to 1939, that "The 'old boy' network of public school, Oxbridge education or time spent in the armed forces was usually the key to getting on in the brave new world of broadcasting."[7] In slightly more oblique fashion he has argued, citing Andrew Crisell, that beyond sport the BBC "in much of its output produced an elitist and conservative culture born of the upper-class and upper middle-class background of its producers and presenters."[8] There is some confusion here regarding the semantics of class. Haynes is certain about the importance of his social class but where he is defined as "upper class" here, in an earlier paper on commentating his is categorised as "upper middle-class."[9]

Jeff Hill sees the broadcasting of sport having been given "a notably upper-class, public-school manner of presentation."[10] The key point for an advocate of Bourdieusian theory is that absolute precision in class location is not the salient issue. According to his sociology, Lotbinière's education at Eton and Trinity, Cambridge located him in the dominant class.[11] Lastly, in the only study of a single sport and radio coverage, Williams notes that BBC cricket reflected the sport's elitist character and highlighted the link between many of its commentators and their public school. Summarising the literature, there is no divergence of opinion: all three authors agree that in early sports coverage, BBC radio commentators were from the social elite and by implication, chosen deliberately.

Using these findings in the relevant literature as a starting point, this chapter goes much further in its analysis of this subject by investigating class orientation across the whole range

[7] Richard Haynes, "'Lobby' and the Formative Years of Radio Sports Commentary, 1935 – 52," *Sport in History*, 29, no.1 (March, 2009), 31.
[8] Haynes, ibid., 12. He quotes A. Crisell, *Understanding Radio* (London: Routledge, 1994), no page reference given.
[9] Haynes, ibid., 25; Richard Haynes: "There's Many a Slip 'Twixt the Eye and the Lip: Exploratory History of Football Broadcasts and Running Commentary," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 34, no. 2 (June 1999), 150.
[10] Jeff Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 48.
[11] Haynes, "'Lobby'," 26.

of sports mediator: those who gave talks and eye-witness accounts of matches and events and running commentaries and those who presented sports magazine programmes, a feature of the 1930s across the regional centres. It also includes the small number of outside broadcasts of after-dinner speeches and receptions for sports touring parties which programme builders selected for broadcast. The extensive empirical research into those who spoke to the national and local audiences from 1923 to the end of 1939 will enable the production of clearer, verifiable conclusions concerning not only the true nature of the BBC but also the link between the monopoly broadcaster and the British class structure more widely. This first of two chapters analysing this aspect of BBC inter-war history focuses on the 1923-29 period (Chapter Four analyses the 1930s). But carrying out this work requires the use of Bourdieu's scientific sociology. It is the relational aspect of the framing of class that will be of prime importance in these chapters. In Bourdieu's field theory it is essential to "think relationally."[12] This is to view and understand social spaces, the BBC for example, as sites of action. Though Bourdieu conceptualised the relational as an alternative to substantialism, where things contain an essential existence in and unto themselves, relational thinking can enable a better understanding of class. Classes should not be seen as part of a division of populations into a static structural system. Rather classes exist only in relation to others within the structure. They are active, not passive. They are always dynamic, however small that motion might be, and they can only be properly understood by their relationship to each other. "The real is the relational," stated Bourdieu.[13] Describing the social world was not enough for him; his job, he felt, was to uncover its true nature. Only relational thinking would make that possible. Bourdieu discovered that in the aspects of the social cosmos that he researched, in every field class dynamics produced differential power possession between classes. He constantly saw a dominant class and a dominated class or classes. What emerges

[12] Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Polity, 1992), 96-97.
[13] Ibid., 97.

from this thinking is the visibility of power in the social world, and, crucially, power inequality.

So in the sub-field of BBC sports mediation, describing those who went before or held the microphone as being "ex-public schoolboys" is insufficient. It must be understood that Reith's recruitment system created a dominant class at the organisation, consisting of dominant class individuals from wider British society, a structuring which, consciously or not, excluded the classes below them, lacking appropriate capital and the required habitus. In this thesis it is necessary now to investigate the cohort of mediators invited to bring sport to the listener. The major line of inquiry concerns the question of whether the Reithian recruitment system for executive staff was extended to mediators, extending the line of class-orientated practice to the point of contact between organisation and audience. Whatever the findings, this will tell us much about the inter-war BBC.

Explaining Reithian Mediator Policy

By the mid-1930s, the BBC was widely viewed as a safety-first, reliable, sober broadcaster, akin to the Bank of England for its solidity and stolidity. In the popular press it was much criticised for its stodginess, for being dull, for its hidebound approach to national affairs and its refusal to provide the now mass audience with sufficient "bright" entertainment.[14] Much of this is fair comment. In 1925, Reith instructed announcers to wear evening dress – part of the habitus of the English gentleman – at the microphone. Before long the organisation was becoming known for its own brand of language, "BBC English." Why did the BBC become an organisation of this style, tone and character? This chapter argues that the root of the explanation is available in the intention of Sir William Noble and the rest of the broadcasting

[14] Siân Nicholas, "Media History or Media Histories? Re-addressing the history of the mass media in inter-war Britain," *Media History*, 18, no. 3-4 (October 2012), 386-7; George Audit, *The BBC Exposed* (London: Left Review, 1937), 16-18.

committee appointed at the behest of the state. Only those with “first class qualifications” were invited to apply for the post of first general manager. This was deeply symbolic. The new broadcasting company came into being with a founding aspirational energy. Reith both absorbed and radiated this energy to his colleagues. The evidence is abundantly available in his autobiography. Of the first days he wrote, “Pathetic to read the story of those early struggles for recognition and opportunity. It had naturally in its first year made no great impact on public life and affairs.”[15] Reith’s drive for success was based on practical policy making.

Two memoranda of 1924 bear evidence of one piece of that policy making that should be regarded as a core part of the tactical battle: his desire to have “first class” people speaking at the microphone. To take the second chronologically first, Reith stated unequivocally in June 1924 – as we saw in the previous chapter - that BBCo staff "should be of social, educational and business standing." Despite the pitfalls inherent in extrapolation, it is highly likely that the same philosophy was extended to mediators also.[16] Three months earlier in March 1924 he had written to station directors directly on the matter of speakers,

> In some stations I see periodically men down to speak whose status, either professionally or socially, and whose qualifications to speak seem doubtful. It should be an honour in every sense of the word for a man to speak from any broadcasting station, and only those who have a claim to be heard above their fellows on any particular subject in the locality should be put on the programme.[17]

[15] John Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 95.
[16] Reith to Station Directors, 24 June, 1924, in Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume I, The Birth of Broadcasting* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 256.
[17] Memorandum from Reith to the Station Directors, March 3, 1924, in Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 256.

As McKibbin has correctly observed, "This put a high price on polish and manner," while Hill's interpretation of BBC sport adopting "a mode of presentation that cherished dignity" can also be directly inferred from Reith's lecture.[18] Its implications, though, were more profound than this. If Reith's ideology was directly adhered to it would at once exclude the classes below that which was considered 'educated'. Attendance at a public school or private institution and perhaps, if the respective individual could display a sufficient number of the dispositions that constituted the habitus of the dominant class, a grammar school, could qualify the individual to be considered 'educated'.[19] This informal rule at a stroke threatened to disbar around 85% of the British population from broadcasting.[20] The aim of this chapter is to examine empirically through its sports output whether Reith was successful in driving forward a broadcasting company and from 1927 a public corporation where givers of talks, discussions, live commentaries, eye-witness accounts and after-dinner speeches were indeed men of social and educational standing with a demonstrable claim to be heard above others.

Radio Sport Begins, April 1923

The pattern of sports output in the first twelve months of the station reflects the relative chaos of the opening BBC period as Reith particularly tried to get to grips with the demands of daily broadcasting across not just a national station but the sixteen regional and local stations also. For the first three months or so broadcasting was produced from two London studios, Magnet House and Marconi House. Wrote Cecil Lewis, assistant to the Head of Programmes, memorably, "…the strain became so great that Lewis told Reith one morning that he would

[18] Jeff Hill, *Sport in History - an introduction* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2011), 98; Ross McKibbin, *Class and Cultures, England 1918-51* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 459.
[19] McKibbin, ibid.
[20] 78.29% of these were working class according to Guy Routh in *Occupation and Pay in Britain 1906-79* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 8 (in McKibbin, ibid., p. 107); McKibbin, using the widely used income criterion for middle-class status, estimates that between 13-16% of the population in 1921 was middle-class (McKibbin, ibid., 44-5). A rough working estimate that the lower middle class or petty bourgeoisie to use Bourdieu's terminology formed around half this figure would put those excluded from BBC recruitment at a shade under 85%. Given that only 3-5% of the British spoke with an RP accent, 95% would be more accurate in reality.

break down if the state of affairs went on much longer. 'You might let me know when you're going to do it,' Reith replied, 'then we can arrange to take it in turns.'"[21] It was not until April 1923 that national station output from '2Lo' was co-ordinated under one roof, at 2 Savoy Hill behind the Strand, a main thoroughfare in the west end of central London. Only then did the first sports output emerge from a programme mix which at all stations was initially dominated by live studio-based music. "Talks" or "addresses" were introduced gradually and haphazardly in the early hurly-burly.[22]

In the spring of 1923 talks output had been delegated to Ralph Wade, a man personally selected by Reith with a background in insurance and the civil service.[23] Tasked with providing twenty-one talks a week, including religious and charitable appeals, he opted for a formal policy of choice based on status and by default, social class.

> My first job was to sit down with a copy of 'Who's Who' in front of me and write to anyone who sounded as if they had done something colourful in their lives. I offered them no expenses but freedom of the ether. There was only one censor and that was myself."[24]

Given Lewis' statement that Reith "was not interested in programming, never," this might be true, though it is hard to imagine that Director of Programmes Arthur Burrows did not take an interest in mediator selection.[25]

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[21] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 141, quoting C. A. Lewis, *Broadcasting From Within* (London: Newnes, 1924), 31.
[22] See Brian Hennessy, *Emergence of Broadcasting in Britain* (Southerleigh: Lympstone, 2005), 309, for a description of office conditions at this time. He references Burrows's *The Story of Broadcasting* here.
[23] Hennessy, ibid., 312.
[24] Ibid., 286. Hennessy quotes Ralph Wade, "Early Life at the BBC," (unpublished manuscript).
[25] Ibid., 315.

The first national sport broadcast was not made until 20 April. a scripted talk by E. S. "Syd" King, secretary-manager of West Ham United, the Company capitalising on the novelty of the second division club's imminent appearance in the English Cup Final.[26] This was a populist approach to output that quickly dissipated but not before young French lawn tennis sensation Suzanne Lenglen was invited to make a talk on 25 June having won that year's and the four previous Wimbledon ladies titles. But by that time two talks on 2Lo on the same sport had set the pattern for the rest of the period, one by Hubert Winter, Hon. Sec. of the All-England Lawn Tennis Club, an exclusive organisation for the socially privileged (twice) and another by Eileen Hooten-Smith on the 'Woman's Hour' programme, an innovation organised by Ella Fitzgerald, a friend of Reith's.[27] Hooten-Smith remains an obscure figure in terms of sport but her 1928 book, *The London Restaurant* is suggestive of a socially elite background judging by its review in *The Sphere*.[28] Soccer secretary-managers or managers appeared very rarely on the BBC in the inter-war period, while sports 'stars' who offered what might acceptably be described 'glamour capital', a specific form of social capital, consisting of the qualities of freshness, youth and physical attractiveness, did not commonly feature unless they could offer the social and cultural capital of the social elite also.[29] In Lenglen's case, being the daughter of a successful French carriage manufacturer, this was assured.[30]

[26] See Charles Korr, *A different kind of success: West Ham United and the creation of tradition and community* in *Sport and the Working Class in Modern Britain*, ed. Richard Holt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).
[27] See, *The Sportsman*, July 24, 1923.
[28] "It deals with places for the connoisseur, like Taglioni's, as well as the great hotels that everyone knows, at least by name." *The Sphere*, June 16, 1928.
[29] Major Frank Buckley and Herbert Chapman were exceptions but appeared only once each according to programme listings. Given the fact that soccer was far and away the most broadcast sport of the period (researcher's own research findings), this is surprising. However, they offered little or no social capital.
[30] Karin Haag, "Lenglen, Suzanne (1899–1938)," *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia*, accessed October 22, 2019, https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/lenglen-suzanne-1899-1938.

The founding sports programme had actually taken place on Monday 9 April from the Cardiff station which had recently opened in February. This was a 'Sports Chat' according to *The Times*, a paper which began listing programmes from 1 January 1923.[31] The broadcaster was Willie C. Clissitt, later listed as "Lt. Col.," which suggests a middle-class or upper middle-class background. Others in possession of such symbolic capital appeared in different roles from the early months.

Symbolic capital in the form of present or past military service as officers was very commonly found in sports mediators in this period. Between 1923 and 1925, forty-two individual mediators, as located in daily listings and *Radio Times*, were listed with a rank attached. A number of them continued to display their Great War rank as the shadow cast by the conflict continued to lengthen. Some were regular broadcasters such as Colonel Philip Trevor (cricket), Major Vernon Brook OBE (motor racing) and Major C. Cooper-Hunt (lawn tennis), most one-off or occasional guests. Such mediators added both actual and symbolic authority to the subject of the broadcast, the relevant station and the organisation as a whole. Reith's demand for 'first class' qualifications in all aspects of the organisation was well met in military men, especially in these first years when a chief aim of the general manager was to establish its own status as a 'first class' national institution.

Talks from provincial stations followed the same patterns of choice as London. This conformity of actualised purpose is crucial in understanding the BBC in its totality. Early speakers from Manchester included Major Christie on shooting (July), County Councillor Harold Fern, Hon. Sec. to the Amateur Swimming Association and Chairman of the Physical Training Sub-Committee of Hertfordshire Education Committee on "Swimming" (July) and

[31] The broadcaster was Willie C. Clissitt's later listing as a "Lt. Col." suggests a middle or upper middle-class background. See, *Writers and Artists' Yearbook* (1949).

station director Dan Godfrey Jnr on rugby union (September). Godfrey Jnr is notable for conducting "the first Wireless Symphony concert" from the station where he "[dispensed] with the usual 'boiled shirt' of the conductor, and wore plus fours and a coloured football jersey for his greater convenience."[32] The "old East Riding and Hull and Richmond player" formed the first BBC rugby union team in February 1925.[33]

For Reith, achieving the tone and character he sought was not difficult at the national station because of the sheer concentration of population in the capital. Dominant class individuals of all kinds of expertise were in abundant supply, both residents and visitors being drawn to the metropolis for a range of reasons. Those responsible for output had a free choice of British sports, growing a new form up from the ground. However, from the outset output was socially constructed. The sports chosen dictated the social class of speaker extremely strongly and these were very largely, perhaps exclusively, dominant class people. In 1923 sports broadcasts numbered 182 (the lowest in BBC history) and only soccer, boxing and horse racing of twenty-three individual sports categories could be said to have reflected the habits of a mass audience. There were thirty-six short racing tips programmes across five stations and nine on boxing, but both sports had disappeared from the schedules by the beginning of 1924. The only popular sport to endure would be soccer (nine units). Of the seventy-one items which can be generalised as 'sport', thirty-seven of these were simply the reading of sports fixtures (across six stations). Twenty were Cardiff's weekly *Sports Chat*s. The national station, known as "2Lo" produced five *Children's Hour* 'Pastimes and Games' programmes and a talk on 'The Imperial Sports Rally' was given by Field-Marshall, Earl Haig. Bar the latter, the mediators must be presumed to have been members of staff, so dominant class voices. The remaining 111 items were comprised of the sports and pastimes organised,

[32] *Radio Times*, February 22, 1924, 340.
[33] *Radio Times*, January 19, 1925, 243.

administered and participated in by the privileged classes: angling; billiards; bloodsports; bridge; bowls; boxing; chess; cricket; hiking; hockey; horse racing; lawn tennis; motor boating; motor cycling; mountaineering; Olympic sport; physical fitness; rugby union; soccer; swimming and winter sports. Thus there was an elision between Reithian staffing policy at the organisation generally, and employment of sports mediator type. The relationship was mutually reinforcing. Output concerning a sport with a large lower-class following was not mediated and reflected back to them by one of their class.

An examination of the social class of 1923's givers of talks patently exposes the Noble-Reith position on establishing a "first class" operation, literally as well as metaphorically. Entry to the field was gained by possession of dominant class credentials combined with subject expertise. In both senses, ultimately, authority was the premium outcome sought. Exceptions to this were extremely rare. For example, Association football's first 2Lo mediator was Allan Baddeley, who gave seven reports on 'To-day's Soccer' from October 1923 to January 1924. The only documentary evidence from the period of one with this name is the grandson of Sir John Baddeley (1st Baronet), formerly sheriff, alderman and Lord Mayor of London.[34] Given policy at this time, his son is the most likely fit. Cricket received just two programmes during the summer and just one on the national station, by F. B. Wilson, "the old Cambridge captain."[35] Manchester's talk, 'A Peep into the Cricket Past' was delivered by John Molyneux, who's other studio outing that year was '10 Minutes in the Caucasus', suggesting an extension of the need for staff or guest speakers to multi-task in the early days.[36]

[34] *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 11, 1922, report, "Talk of the Town," on a Mansion House party.
[35] *Dundee Courier*, May 17, 1923.
[36] Jennifer Purcell, *Mother of the BBC, Mabel Constanduros and the Development of Popular Entertainment on the BBC, 1925-57* (London: Bloomsbury Academic and Professional, 2020), 23-4.

Boxing reflected the power of dominant class capital possession and the allure of expert closeness to the first-class sportsman whatever their social class. Major Tosswill gave a pair of talks on the subject on 2Lo but Billy Ames, prestigious promoter and manager (of George Carpentier, recently European heavyweight and lightweight champion) gave one talk on 2Lo and five from Cardiff. The Ames series of talks suggests that provincial stations could be more progressive. However, for them, experts of national renown were thinner on the ground. Bridge, the supremely emblematic card game of the dominant class was mediated by Miss Jane Ramsay Kerr. Her expertise is suggested by the range of topics – 'The Gambling Element', 'Bridge Card Manners', 'Selfishness at Bridge', 'Bridge Conventions' - her social class indicated by an article for the *Daily Express* in 1920 on 'Modern Miss Fifteen' with its references to daughters having to carry their mother's golf clubs and fetching a novel "from the top of the house."[37] The first chess mediator, Benjamin Glover Laws, was President of the Chess Problem Society – and ex-editor of *Chess Monthly*.

In 1923 the refusal to mediate working-class or petty-bourgeois sports on the wireless further closed off social opportunities for non-dominant class voices. Reith's intention to bring the "best of everything" to as many Britons as possible inserted from the beginning the ubiquitous sound of received pronunciation from all BBC announcers, a segment of the workforce exclusively recruited from the public school and 'Varsity system. This produced a doxa underlining the necessity of mediators possessing this specific aspect of dominant class habitus that may well have been in place before the first BBC broadcasts at the experimental Marconi station where Burrows and Eckersley had been regular broadcasters and at the handful of other companies essaying the same trials.

[37] *Nottingham Journal*, August 12, 1920, citing Ramsay Kerr article in the *Daily Express*.

Though rare, there were identifiable exceptions to these elite tendencies. Five-time Open Champion John H. Taylor made a talk on golf in May for the *Men's Talk* series, quickly followed by world billiards champion Willie Smith. Both Taylor and Smith were of working-class origin and both spoke on 2Lo. To these may be added Ames' boxing talks and both Lenglen and King (all noted above). Horse racing, a sport avidly followed by the masses that might have opened up a space for the development of non-dominant class broadcasters was soon closed off. For five months a rash of tipster broadcasts were made from Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow and London but they disappeared from the schedules in August. The circumstantial evidence of Reith personally decapitating this development is strong given his huge distaste for betting on religious grounds.

The impact of working-class sportspeople on the radio was mitigated by the tendency of the 'uneducated' to attempt to ape the accent of the upper echelons of the class system in the hope of acceptance from individuals in the dominant class. To what extent Taylor and Ames tried to replicate RP is not known to this researcher, though Taylor was a keen self-educator and wrote an autobiography without a ghostwriter. Smith did not (see Chapter Four). At fifty-three years of age in 1924, Taylor's huge stature in the game as a course architect, club manufacturer and professional at the Royal Mid Surrey course lent him huge weight in terms of symbolic capital without that which elite family attachment would have brought.[38] That he was a close friend of the public school and 'Varsity educated Bernard Darwin may say something of Taylor having acquired sufficient socially privileged class habitus to have achieved a significant measure of acceptance in dominant class circles.

[38] On John H. Taylor see article at *World of Golf Hall of Fame*, last updated August 20, 2020, https://www.worldgolfhalloffame.org/j-h-taylor/.

The first calendar year of the first formally constituted British broadcasting organisation, established as a monopoly by state authority, was one where a number of templates for ongoing praxis were created. Mediator choice was one. To a very large extent it was adhered to for the rest of the decade. Once two early forms of sports output, notification of fixtures and, more significantly, racing tips, had been discarded, the remaining form seen in 1923, the scripted talk, continued to be dominant for the next three years (until the end of the Company).

The last three years of the Company: 1924-6

In the three years that followed, empirical investigation shows that the initial pattern found in 1923 became very firmly established in line with Reith's consistency in applying the philosophy of "first class qualifications" and "people of social and educational standing." For example, in the first quarter of 1924 fifty-six sports talks were made. Thirty were weekly sports reviews, often by journalists. One was a football referee and one a county president of the Rugby Football Union. Their exact social class is difficult to ascertain for want of biographical data. The remaining twenty-six talks were given by ex-players (rugby, lawn tennis), a professional golfer, two Olympians (athletics and hockey), Hon. Secretaries of associations (hockey in *Women's Hour*), a Brigadier-General, a Major and surgeon, two Boys Brigade officers (*Children's Hour*), a medical doctor (badminton) and a BA in English Literature (J. C. B. Carter, Bournemouth).[39] Status is the common denominator here, conferring – it was fervently hoped or perhaps expected – authority upon the speaker which would rebound to the BBCo itself in the mind of the audience.

[39] Carter also wrote an article for the March 28, 1924 issue of *Radio Times* on the work of the novelist Joseph Conrad (page 21).

A snapshot of output during the eight days between Saturdays 5th and 12th July 1924 shows twelve sports broadcasts were given. One was by the Secretary of Warwick County Cricket Club, one by Councillor F. W. H. Peaty JP, Mayor of Weymouth, ('Athletics and Morals'), one by an E. J. Roberts on 'Sportsmanship' (Bournemouth), one by the baronet, Sir Francis Gordon Lowe ('Essentials for Lawn Tennis', 2Lo) and one by Eustace Miles, grandson of a baronet who attended Marlborough and Trinity, Cambridge ('Training for Games', 2Lo). One weekly talk was made each Saturday by Willie Clissitt ('Sport of the Week' Cardiff), one was given on wicket-keeping from Aberdeen by George Wilson (unknown), one on bowls by E. J. Linney (2Lo), Hon. Sec. of the British Bowling Board and editor of *Bowling* magazine, "whose writings on the game of bowls [were] known throughout the British Empire," according to the *Western Morning News* in 1927 and one on golf from Cardiff by a person unknown.[40]

A 'Special programme' broadcast on 29 September 1924 best supports the hypothesis that programme builders sought to create broadcasting as a social product that reflected the de facto cultural and moral superiority of the public school class. This was a 'Comedy of Sporting Memories' and represents an ambitious, elaborate production, lasting all of two hours. Relayed from London to all local stations, the set-up involved one "Sir Lumley Basing, who stroked Oxford to victory in 19--" and a dinner in "the dining room of an English country house" which he gave to a number of his "sportsmen" friends, all of whom had sporting reminiscences to regale for the enjoyment of their fellow guests. The writer, Arthur Corbett-Smith, was a Great War Major who became a post-war author of books on the Western Front. He was made the first Director of the Cardiff station in 1923 before moving to Savoy Hill the following year. The host was Sir Theodore Cook (Radley and Wadham, Oxford), Boat Race oarsman, international fencer, International Olympic Committee member

[40] *Western Morning News*, February 21, 1927.

and editor of *The Field,* a publication that avowedly served the sports-inclined social elite. Its showcasing in the *Radio Times* and its length, the first time sport had enjoyed this much attention, adds to its notability. The exact intention of the Company staff in making such a programme is not known but this exuberant celebration of upper-class sport and culture is open to a number of readings, positive, negative or neutral according to the political leanings, social class and level of socio-political self-awareness of the reader.

Set-pieces such as this were periodical. The most popular form was the transmission of sporting after-dinner speeches, most often the welcome lunch for touring teams. January 1925 saw the broadcast of 'Speeches on the Occasion of the All Blacks Lunch' which included Lords Desborough and Lonsdale, Leo Amery from the Tory Cabinet, the captain and manager of the New Zealanders and the Prince of Wales. In Bourdieusian analysis, the decision to include this item in the programming schedule has several features: firstly, it was to sanction a display of dominant class power and the inferiority of the dominated classes; secondly, it illustrates the unconscious nature of dominant class decision-making, it being highly probable that the members of staff responsible did not see the decision in class terms and finally, it reveals the power of doxa, the proposition underlying the output choice being the ideological belief that it is perfectly correct that individuals of high societal rank should be given a radio platform and that the radio audience would naturally benefit from whatever it is members of the aristocracy and the royal family had to say. The April 1926 2Lo broadcast 'Speeches at a Luncheon given to the Australian Cricket Team by the London District of the Institute of Journalists' functions in a similar way. This included a toast proposed by the Rt. Hon. F. S. Jackson, MP, himself a test cricketer of some renown. The social capital he possessed was typically brought to social occasions such as this where the endowment of social honour was symbolically appropriated by the sport involved, in this case

cricket. The hour of the broadcast, 2pm, meant that this could only have been consumed by the retired, the unemployed, female homemaking cricket fans and people of independent means. Programme Board minutes show that this committee which could approve or disbar suggested output items was sensitive to potential audiences. It cannot be discounted that approval was granted for the benefit of the socially privileged.

In July 1925, the broadcast from an event at the Albert Hall in London to promote the new National Playing Fields Association, included A. E. Gilligan (cricket), W. W. Wakefield (rugby), H. Abrahams (athletics), J. H. Taylor (golf), Steve Donohue (horse racing), H. Roper-Barratt (lawn tennis) and Mr. Max Woosnam (athletics, lawn tennis, soccer). Only Donahue was not from the dominant class and only the latter two did not broadcast on the BBC. Other speakers included Ramsay McDonald, the Duchess of Athol, Margaret Bondfield MP, Lady Astor MP and the Duke of Sutherland. This organisation constituted a patriarchal benevolent attempt to democratise the availability of sporting and recreational space across Britain, founded by the Duke of York (later King George VI) and Brigadier-General Reginald Kentish.[41] Such a rich display of symbolic and direct sporting capital speaks deeply of Reithian ideals with the total combination of social classes enmeshed in the event enabling the BBC to truly claim a role as a broadcaster for the whole nation. The Manchester station's May 1926 broadcast of speeches from a dinner given in honour of that year's FA Cup finalists by Allied Newspapers Limited, relayed from the Midland Hotel of that city, forms a rare regional example of the same celebratory type of broadcast. However, its more democratic subject, soccer, a sport inextricably bound to working-class cultural practices, should be noted. LeMahieu's observation that BBC programme builders "...constructed a schedule which reflected the biases and most treasured cultural aspirations of their class" is

[41] "Private Papers of Brigadier-General R. J. Kentish," Imperial War Museum website, accessed November 30, 2019, https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1030021572.

well born out in these broadcasts, but also in most sports output from the national station in this period.[42]

Local broadcasting's speedy development from 1924 – there were seventeen stations broadcasting to local populations by the start of 1925 – included a firm commitment to sports programming which deserves to be uncovered. For example, Manchester, Cardiff, Aberdeen, Dundee, Newcastle, Bournemouth and Hull are especially notable for radio sport production in this period either for quantity of output across the calendar year or inclusion of very regular weekly programmes. The latter form became a notable output feature, usually mediated by a single regular broadcaster. Some are hard to trace but not all. Manchester's key soccer mediator of the 1920s was Stacey F. Lintott, editor of the *Manchester Daily Despatch*.[43] One of his five brothers, Evelyn, an amateur international at soccer, was educated at the Royal Grammar School, Guildford, firmly establishing the family as solidly middle-class. Ernie Edwards, the dominant sports broadcaster at the Liverpool station, had an extremely lengthy career as "Bee" for the *Liverpool Daily Post* and *Liverpool Echo* through to the 1940s.[44] His weekly programme began in February 1926 and ended in February 1928. Peter Craigmyle, whose Friday evening soccer broadcasts from Aberdeen spanned the period February 1924 to April 1929 and was the last of the local sports weeklies to be discontinued, was a senior soccer referee, implying attachment to one fraction or other above the working and petty-bourgeois classes. The automatic authority this position seemed to convey was enthusiastically embraced in 1925 at the Dundee station where a group of referees were engaged to deliver their weekly sports feature: "It ought to be known that referees are taking charge of the Sports Corner of 2DE, Dundee's broadcasting station. Messrs Cathro,

[42] Dan LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy, Mass Communications and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 183.
[43] WAC R13/360 Regions: North 1923-34, regional report in 1925 by J. C. Stobart.
[44] Edwards may have continued beyond 1946, the last date for which I have evidence of him at the *Echo*. See *Liverpool Football Club History*, accessed July 19, 2016, http://www.lfchistory.net/Articles/Article/2574.

Campbell, Wilson, Dye and Dudgeon are on the Management Committee," wrote the *Dundee Evening Courier*.[45] How long this coup lasted is not clear. John Kenmir's biography is unknown but he gave a weekly talk on Association football at the Newcastle station on Saturday evenings from February 1924 through to the close of the 1926-7 season, seventy-nine in all. Nothing is known either of J. G. Stephens's background though he made eighty weekly football talks at Hull from 1925 to the beginning of 1928. More is known about L. E. Williams, who on the Cardiff station from 1925 often broadcast in tandem with Leigh Woods. Williams was probably Lewis Erskine Wyndham Williams, educated at the Oratory School. His father-in-law, Robert Lewis was an Oxford man. His talk in October 1927, 'Colonial Reflections', suggests administrative experience somewhere in the Empire, increasing the likelihood of dominant class membership. Leigh Woods, a "pen name of A. G. Powell," was noted in *Radio Times* as having "a wide interest in sport, travel and archaeology, as well as a love of adventure," clearly suggesting dominant class attachment.[46] As Powell, he broadcast on a range of subjects, particularly naval issues, sport and local issues pertaining to the Bristol area.[47]

The apparent slightly mixed class attachment of provincial mediators requires more research but it is likely given the absence of evidence in the BBC archive of a controversy concerning this that while dominant class members were desirable – Reith's 1924 memo to directors shows this – if they could not be found, the invaluable knowledge capital wielded by local journalists was acceptable in compensation. The availability of press information about sports contributors to *Sports Corner* in Dundee indicates the use of a different group: the sports

[45] *Dundee Evening Courier*, August 11, 1925.
[46] *Radio Times*, August 7, 1931, 315.
[47] See for example, *Radio Times* programme listings at: https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/search/0/20?adv=0&q=A+G+Powell&media=all&yf=1923&yt=2009&mf=1&mt=12&tf=00%3A00&tt=00%3A00#search.

referee, whose authority and expertise were sources of capital used over and over again across many stations in the 1920s and beyond.

The Cardiff station provides an example of one which clearly appeared to be trying to match 2Lo's elitism by using individuals of sporting and social status when and where they could. Dr. "Teddy" Morgan, who gave thirteen talks on rugby in this period on the Cardiff station played for Wales in the famous game against the All Blacks in 1905 and scored fourteen tries from the wing for Wales in sixteen matches. Also on "rugger," as BBC individuals were extremely fond of calling it, Gil Evans, the "Welsh International and Oxford and Cambridge Inter-'Varsity Referee" gave twelve talks between December 1924 and March 1926 from the Birmingham station. Bournemouth used Major Charles Cooper-Hunt, the ex-Cambridge Blue and Hampshire County player, "a great authority on tennis" according to *Radio Times*, fourteen times in three summers.[48] Cardiff, whose enthusiasm for sports broadcasting was notably strong, also made much use of Norman Riches, who played for Glamorgan from 1900 to the war and beyond, and was captain in 1913, 1914, and 1921. He played for Gentlemen v. Players at the Oval in 1923. He made a series of six talks in 1925 entitled, 'The Cricket Over', each talk concerning a single ball. The Newcastle station procured the services of a leading Northumberland Rugby Football Union official A. B. Thompson from the autumn of 1925; he made twenty-three Saturday evening "rugger" broadcasts before the Company era ended at December's end in 1926.

In Scotland, a 1924 snapshot reveals the same attempt to follow the Reithian system. Compared with London rather more minor figures received invitations; the greater difficulty in uncovering their backgrounds underlines their lesser status. This was especially so in the east of Scotland with its relatively sparse population. The more metropolitan Glasgow station

[48] *Radio Times*, March 21, 1924, 485.

could call on local *Glasgow Evening News* journalist G. B. Primrose, who became the dominant sports broadcaster at 5SC, participants – occasionally - such as the Olympic athlete Eric Liddell and Andrew Cunningham, the Glasgow Rangers player and "Scottish Football Internationalist" (as described in *Radio Times*) to inform the public about 'Boys Week' and 'Scottish Scout Week' and a pair of administrational figures in William Allan, ex-President and ex-Champion of Glasgow Bowling Association and George McDougall, Secretary of Scottish Quoiting Association. In Aberdeen, programmers had to use the local resources they could. Cruden Bay's golf professional John McAndrew was used at one point. Spring saw Dr. Gordon J. Mutch coming in to "chat" about cricket, Dr. John Crombie about the history of lawn tennis, James D. Cook about simply 'Tennis'. Aside from McAndrew, *Radio Times* printed names but no biographical information at all. The following summer saw a familiar pattern in Aberdeen with C. H. Webster, "the well-known Aberdeenshire cricketer and Hon. Secretary of the County Club," making fifteen consecutive weekly cricket talks around a wide-ranging choice of topics, the longest series of talks by one person on a single sport in the history of BBC sport between the wars.[49]

Patently the inability of local stations to source individuals with high levels of symbolic capital induced Reith to make his 1924 complaint to his Station Directors regarding some mediators being deficient in social status.[50] This memo, a combination of mission statement and exhortation, is of paramount importance in underlining the Reithian values which drove the early company. His use of the phrase "honour in every sense of the word" in his lament underlines his high conception of the organisation, but it also implies an emphasis on social status above professional status among criteria for inclusion. Reith does not appear to have elaborated on this theme so further inquiry is impeded. Nevertheless, the huge import of the memorandum remains.

[49] *Arbroath Herald and Advertiser for the Montrose Burghs*, May 27, 1927.
[50] See above, 102-3, 17, n.

An examination of female mediators, though few in number, also reveals dominant class hegemony in mediation. Most choices reflected the lives of the educated girl and the sports of their school and domestic arenas, hockey and lawn tennis, and were delivered axiomatically by a female dominant class individual. For example, Mrs Jamieson, "...the well-known yachtswoman and authoress..." gave two talks on yachting from Glasgow and Edinburgh. A newspaper report on a talk she gave in 1928 also refers to her Major husband.[51] The bridge talks have already received mention as has Miss Hooten-Smith who made three talks coinciding with the 1925 Wimbledon championships, including 'Personality in Tennis'. This triple feature and her two talks on 'Women Players', suggest a familiarity with the leading competitors of the day and of having played with some of them. Lawn tennis in this period was still resolutely a game for the genteel female from 'good' families and the Wimbledon tournament still a place where the "first-class" sports woman had the opportunity to excel competitively. Ladies golf's middle-class character in the 1920s, means that though Miss Florence M. Austin ('A Chat about Golf', Stoke, September 1926) and Miss Mabel Battiscombe ('Golf at St. Andrews', Glasgow same month) are both unknowns, they almost certainly conform to the pattern. The Dundee Station used Gertrude East of the Scottish Hockey Selection Committee and Council nine times across hockey and lawn tennis equally. Her hockey talks were located in Scotland bar one address on umpiring and playing techniques, but her tennis broadcasts were on play and players in the French Riviera. Her position in hockey administration and her depiction of swinging rackets in the Mediterranean sun makes her classifiable in class terms.

Four per cent of programmes were specifically aimed at women in this period, although not all were given by women. The Bournemouth station in their 1924 *Talks to Women* series saw Capt. H. B. Rowley chatting twice about 'Golf' and in July 1926 Mr. E. Carey-Riggall

[51] *The Scotsman*, January 19, 1928.

sounded forth on 'Motor Cycling for Ladies' from Sheffield. Harry Haslam gave a talk to women on hockey twice in the autumn of 1923 on 2Lo, before W. A. Baumann, Hon. Sec. All-England Women's Hockey Association spoke in February 1924 about their tour to South Africa, establishing a woman's hockey voice for the first time. In March 1926 the president of same, the Cheltenham Ladies College-educated Edith Thompson, made her first of many hockey talks, including one on a 'Public School-Girls' Tour' in 1928. As Halpin has stated, the Association was founded by women from the university-educated upper middle-class.[52] During its first thirty years it had faced what it saw as the difficult problem of a passion for league play, desired mainly by northern clubs with a more working-class player base. There is no sign from the BBC in this period of their giving space to women outside the ranks of the Association from 2Lo.

In the provinces Jean Rankine, an England hockey international, gave three talks at the Glasgow studio in 1926. The social class of Miss Norah Balls – 'The Call of the Open Air-Hockey, Yesterday and Today' (Newcastle, 1926) – suggests that privileged class birth was not essential to speaking on the BBCo. According to one source, she was the daughter of a mariner, born in Tynemouth, suggesting working-class origins. Her subsequent biography, however, shows an upward social class trajectory: involvement in the suffragette movement through the Women's Social and Political Union; secretary of the Tynemouth Branch of the Local Government Association; founder of the Girl Guides in Northumberland after the war, becoming a town councillor (independent) and JP.[53] The events are not precisely dated, but one must presume that by 1926, aged 43, she can be classified as middle class, possibly

[52] Jo Halpin, "'Thus far and no farther': the rise of women's hockey leagues in England from 1910 to 1939," *Sport in History*, 37, no. 2 (June 2017), 146-163.
[53] "Five More: Lilian Ball, Gertrude Ballam, Nora Balls, Harry Bark and Lady Barclay." The Lives of Suffragettes and Suffragists blog, January 30, 2016, https://www.uncoveryourancestors.org/blog/five-more-lilian-ball-gertrude-ballam-nora-balls-harry-bark-and-lady-barclay; Michael Bender, *The Yachting Narrative, with particular reference to Cornwall*, The Online Journal of the National Maritime Museum, Cornwall, 1, no. 4 (2009), https://nmmc.co.uk/publication/the-english-yachting-narrative-with-particular-reference-to-cornwall/.

categorizable as lower fraction dominant class. Constance Jeans is the only clear found exception to the rule on class, having no apparent connections to the social elite. Jeans was a swimmer who competed with conspicuous success at both the 1920 and 1924 Olympic Games, winning silver medals as a member of the 4 x 100 women's relay team. Her three fellow members at the Antwerp 1920 games Antwerp were swam at Liverpool's Garston swimming club in a working-class docks area of the city, a remarkable fact at a time when British Olympic teams tended to be exclusively inhabited by the socially privileged. "Connie" Jeans' two broadcasts came from the Nottingham relay station in 1926. Her invitation to speak begs more questions than it provides answers, a tantalising glimpse of what the BBC could have been: more socially inclusive. Jeans place in BBC history seems only to reinforce the irrational principle of the exception proving the rule. Her appearance would have disproved it had it been repeated by others; it was not.

Women's talks were indeed sparse compared to those of men, especially when it is taken into account that twelve of the seventy talks were made in designated programmes for the sex, on 2Lo's *Women's Hour*, Cardiff's *Women's Corner* and Aberdeen's *Feminine topics*. Few women spoke often. The most frequent was Louise Thibault on the Birmingham station, who made several series of talks: on physical fitness; on 'Sports Real or Otherwise' and on winter sports. Her first, in September 1925 on fencing points clearly to her French family being the equivalent of the British bourgeoisie at the least. Another French woman, Mlle. Marguerite Michaudel, spoke on 'Sports and Games in France and in Scotland' from Dundee the same year.

The Exceptions – Other lower-class broadcasters

In London, broadcasters of sport from the working- and petit-bourgeois classes were very few in number, expressing a policy of exclusion in tune with the Reithian statements noted above. However, this, as noted above, appears to have been less so in the provinces. Regular soccer reporter Rex Kingsley came to the Dundee station as assistant director in January 1925 having begun his broadcasting career as an announcer at BBC Glasgow where he narrowly avoided being sacked by John Reith. This was on account of his first giving – for Reith – a bad pronunciation of "Bach", then passing a note on stage during a broadcast concert with his London chief in attendance.[54] His removal to Dundee was effectively a demotion. Quaey – his birth surname which he changed at the BBC because of its unusualness - was the son of a postman, and despite his family "going without" so that he could attend grammar school, his first job was as an apprentice in his uncle's chemists' shop. He then studied at drama school where his flair for accent enabled him, in his words, to "speak posh". His work at 2DE included drama – he was a talented actor by all accounts and he directed. Kingsley soon left to begin a highly successful career as a soccer journalist in Scotland and from 1929 began giving live commentaries on Scottish football matches for the BBC. Thus Kingsley is an example of a one born outside the middle class who learned to sound like a dominant class member. Unlike Burrows, he did not grow up within sight and sound of the culture of the privileged.

At the flagship national station only the exceptional sportsman could break this apparent embargo on working-class voices on the air, their vast expertise, experience and fame capital acting to offset their deficient social and cultural capital. In February 1926, international goalkeeper "Ted" Taylor made a talk ('Soccer International Goalkeeper Experiences', 2Lo, Feb 1926). He was Huddersfield Town's goalie in their championship winning years 1924 to

[54] Charles Kingsley, *I Saw Stars* (Aberdeen: Kingsley Glasgow, 1947), 18-20.

1926 and had won eight England caps. Taylor was the son of a railway clerk from West Derby, Liverpool.[55] Also in soccer, Tottenham Hotspur manager and ex-Scottish international Peter McWilliam, whose father had been a grocer's porter, made one talk in 1926. Tom Aiken, a humble Aberdonian, spoke under the title, "Twenty-five years a Billiards Champion in October 1926." He was Scotland's outstanding billiards player of his generation, making his first century break at ten years of age. Later he went to England and beat everybody.[56]

Patsy Hendren, the Test cricketer and Phil Scott, the champion boxer, made talks under the title, *My Programme*, an autumn 1926 series the aim of which was to make the station appear less elitist. As *Radio Times* put it,

> The idea is that, as so many people write to the B.B.C. criticizing the London Programmes, they are to be given a chance to hear programmes arranged by newcomers with fresh and possibly helpful ideas.[57]

The message is easy to decode: "fresh newcomers" meant people from below the multi-fractional dominant class. However, the experiment was not to be repeated.

Later, in 1928, Charles Buchan gave two soccer talks. Buchan was a towering figure in the game in the 1910-28 period, but of lower class origin, the son of an Aberdonian blacksmith and sometime Highland Regiment sergeant who migrated to south-east London. But his talk on 'Sportsmanship' emphasised the BBC's priorities. A promoter of amateur sport, Buchan,

[55] "'Ted' Taylor," *England Football Online*, last updated August 20, 2020, http://www.englandfootballonline.com/TeamPlyrsBios/PlayersT/BioTaylorEH.html.
[56] Andy Hunter, "The Cue Collector," *Amateur Billiard Player* (Spring 2002), http://www.thecuecollector.com/files/CueCollectorArticles/Hunter_Article_17__Camkin_.pdf.
[57] *Radio Times,* October 15, 1926, 189.

though a professional, could wax on the classic gentleman-amateurism ideal. Scott, to a significant extent, reflected the core values of the Reithian recruitment system, having been a policeman after naval war service, then a fireman, then later having served the Empire in the Egyptian police. Hendren was from the lower orders but became an outstanding England cricketer and also a professional footballer with Brentford. His later employment at Harrow school suggests multiple readings. He can be seen as being endowed with an echo of dominant class capital, or alternatively, his use may be seen as a depiction of two opposing classes where Hendren's servant to public schoolboy master relationship was an endorsement of a nineteenth social order. Though such hypothesis-making runs close to supposition, it is vital to raise the issue because of the Reithian system driving BBC output at this time.

In the three years which followed the foundation year, the BBCo cemented in place this Reithian system in three overlapping ways. Firstly, lighter music and occasional comedy sketches aside, output was aimed at education and cultural uplift. This consisted of talks on serious subjects by dominant class members of society and musical content umbilically attached to dominant class tastes. Sabbath Day output was entirely devoted to Anglican services, other religious subject matter and sacred music. Secondly, those granted the privilege of addressing national and local audiences were intended to be dominant class individuals across all subject areas, sport included. Thirdly, all BBCo decision making in the creation and execution of policy was carried out by members of the dominant class who colonised the policy execution, administrational and programme building positions in the organisation.

Two symbolically significant events took place in the 1924-6 period, aside from the General Strike, both of which raised the national status of the BBC and underline Reith's intentions

for the BBC's character: one, the first royal broadcast took place[58] and two, Reith ordered the unseen studio announcers in London to wear evening dress as a uniform to underline their status as men of "culture, experience and knowledge."[59] As the Company years ended and the Corporation years began, John Reith, now endowed with the extra symbolic capital of a knighthood, presided over an organisation founded on concrete ideological principles systematically applied. Reith's sincere intention to improve the nation involved disavowing socialistic ideas he had flirted with in almost joining the Labour party in 1922, reinterpreting the term 'democracy' as one of mass access to dominant class culture and making the BBC a repository for the principle that only the "educated" classes knew and understood how best to run the country and decide its key principles. BBC sport was very much a part of, not separate from, this.

Reith, as he set out clearly in his 1924 book, *Broadcasting Over Britain* and in various articles in the *Radio Times* (and elsewhere in speeches and other newspaper and magazine articles), sought openly to construct a monopoly broadcaster which would bring "all that was best" in the world of science, current affairs, music, literature, fine art and other salient topics thought worthy of coverage by Reith and his fellow dominant class senior colleagues. The only departure from this philosophy came in the small number of occasions when comedy or 'light entertainment' allowed professional entertainers, usually from the lower classes, to broadcast.

In sport at the national station, a system of social exclusionism was enforced, a system of social apartheid constructed, ironically, or perhaps not, in a period which saw the first Labour party government dedicated, in principle at least, to class equality. Conceptualising the BBCo as a field in terms of non-menial staff we have seen that a game was played where the rules

[58] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 290-1.
[59] McKibbin, *Classes & Cultures*, 459-60.

of entry were instituted – rigged is perhaps a more meaningful word - in favour of those educated at Britain's private educational institutions where a similar system of social and financial exclusion was at work. It was these men and one woman (Hilda Matheson) who applied a Reithian code of practice which involved inviting men and women to mediate sports output to national and local audiences. In the Bourdieusian field, the rules of entry in London were extremely similar to those of the field of recruitment. The difference is that in this former case exceptions were allowed. The reason for this can only be surmised but almost without doubt this occurred because of the fact that a small number of sports the BBCo covered were followed or participated in avidly by members of the working class and petite bourgeoisie. In mid-twenties Britain, whatever the dominant class BBCo staff might have liked, it was almost inconceivable that an organisation which claimed to be deploying a form of democratic thinking, and at a time of severe inter-class strife, would operate a system which excluded the voices of the working class completely. Removing teleological thinking from the inquiry, a policy of total class apartheid was possible, but was avoided. It is remarkable enough that the possibility of constructing such a system existed. Such a possibility did exist because of the ideological proximity of the extreme nature of Reithian exclusionism. The more diluted class politics of mediator selection at the local level diffuses the strength or severity of Reithian ideology made manifest, but it is very hard to find working-class men and women talking about sport on the radio. This shows clearly that BBC staff had enormous difficulty in seeing working-class people as equals, bearing out McKibbin's view that the dominant class regarded the working class as fit only for servile positions in British society.[60] This depiction is also a validation of Bourdieu's presentation of the action of symbolic capital and habitus separating populations into the powerful and the

[60] Ibid.

disempowered, operational weapons in a system that functioned in part through symbolic violence.

In a meta-field such as British society where competition for power was growing increasingly intense after the extension of the franchise, an acceptance of the value of working- class people, the dominated, directly threatened the interests of the dominant. Sports mediators, then, just like those mediating other topics, were actors performing a service for the dominant, while they were helping Reith to establish the BBC as a credible broadcasting machine, by carrying into the greatest possible number of homes the best in their department of human knowledge.

Sports Mediators in the New British Broadcasting Corporation: 1927-29

Extending the forgoing analysis to the years 1927-29, the last year before a substantially altered structure of non-national broadcasting began in March 1930, the so-called 'Regional Scheme', the results show essential continuity with the Company years. The Reithian systems explicated above remained in place. A snapshot of output across all stations in March 1927 supports this conclusion. The mediators continued almost exclusively to be high status individuals, their capital resources supposedly conferring automatic authority upon their comments, ideas and beliefs. Just eighteen sports talks were given during the month as output space was now occupied by running commentaries and eye-witness-accounts.

The staging of the first live sports running commentary at the England-Wales rugby international at Twickenham on January 15, 1927 was a watershed in radio sport history, and such broadcasts quickly became a feature of the early years of the new Corporation with 149 commentaries during the calendar year across the entire network. The first BBC sports

commentator was Teddy Wakelam, an ex-Harlequins public school and Oxford product.[61] The employee in charge of organising the new form, Lance Sieveking, was tasked with finding commentators and producing such events in newly-constructed gimcrack commentary huts. A week after the founding live commentary, George Allison, a director of The Arsenal FC, gave the first live soccer commentary, recruited via the same method as Wakelam.[62] At the national station, as narrators or commentators grew to become a recognisable cohort, it became clear that the possession of sizeable amounts of social and cultural capital was the dominant criterion for being offered the role.

Guy Oliver Nickalls was chosen for one of the emblematic sports events of the dominant class of 1927, the 'Varsity Boat Race. His educational pedigree was impeccable - Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford – as was his top-class rowing experience. As the *Radio Times* pointed out, "he himself rowed in the Oxford boats in 1921, 1922, and 1923, the last year, when he was President and rowed '7', being the only occasion on which Oxford has won the race since the war."[63] He had rowed in two Olympic Games, 1920 and 1928. His father had been a major figure in the sport, five times a Boat Race participant, the Oxford Boat Club president in 1890 and a major success at the Henley Regatta and an Olympian in 1908 at the age of forty-two. His son had other qualities the BBC liked: he was young and still a sporting participant. He proved to be a good choice. Reith was overjoyed with the broadcast. Commentating from a boat that followed the crews on the river throughout the race – a novel idea at the time – Nickalls was partnered by author J. C. Squire. Cock's correspondence with both clubs' negotiator, Charles Pitman KC, JP (Eton, New College, and Oxford, coxed in four Boat Races) shows the clubs' concern regarding who the BBC might select for

[61] Wakelam's biography is discussed in detail in Chapter Three, as is Sieveking's.
[62] George Allison, *Allison Calling* (London: Staples Press, 1948), 37-8; Paul Sieveking, *Airborne, Scenes From the Life of Lance Sieveking, Pilot, Writer and Broadcasting Pioneer* (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2013), 171.
[63] *Radio Times*, March 14, 1927, 666-7.

commentary. Squire was a public school and ‘Varsity man, his St. John’s, Cambridge background neatly balancing that of Nickalls.

For the Grand National broadcast Lance Sieveking engaged two well-known racing ‘characters’, R. C. Lyle and Meyrick Good, the latter being principal narrator.[64] Both men were major racing journalists, Lyle the correspondent of *The Times*. Good “had been 'Man on the Spot' for the *Sporting Life* for many years and was an expert race-reader...Ever since 1921, when Lord Derby invited him to his box to 'read' the race to King George V, this had become established practice."[65] Good’s education was independent but not prestigious: the Royal Masonic School for Boys had been set up for the sons of needy freemasons. His patriotic attachment to the King, evident in his memoir, suggests an habitus fully in line with Reith’s reverence for monarchy and the turf’s reputation as the ‘sport of Kings’.[66]

The choice for the sports event the BBC considered the most prestigious, the Derby, Geoffrey Gilbey, had been educated at Eton and Christchurch, Oxford where “he made his mark as an athlete, winning the School Mile and his Blue .”[67] His war record included being awarded the MC in 1915. After the Rifles he became a journalist and made his reputation as 'Tattenham' of *The Sunday Express* and *Racing Specialist* before moving to *The People* as the new 'Larry Lynx'.[68] For the 1928 National, Meyrick Good was replaced by Gilbey. "As far as I was concerned,” wrote one racing mad public schoolboy, “the 1928 Grand National broadcast was a great improvement on its predecessor."[69] In a period where “first class” included competence, much sought after if not always available, ineptitude probably explains Good’s

[64] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 172.
[65] Peter O'Sullevan, *Calling the Horses- A Racing Autobiography* (London: Stanley & Paul, 1989), 9.
[66] Meyrick Good, *Good Days* (London: Hutchinson, 1941), 176.
[67] *The Peerage*, “Geoffrey Holland Gilbey,” last edited December 27, 2008, http://www.thepeerage.com/p31041.htm .
[68] *Radio Times*, May 27, 1927, 393.
[69] Allison, *Allison Calling*, 10.

de-selection. For the 1928 St. Leger broadcast, Geoffrey was assisted by his brother Quentin. Gilbey's family was bourgeois and financially successful. Gilbey Snr and his brother made a fortune in wine and spirits retail. His father was a Master of Foxhounds and had been an acquaintance of King Edward VII.[70]

Cricket's first narrator was Reverend F. H. Gillingham. His cricketing capital came in the form of having been an Essex batsman and four-times selected for the Gentlemen against the Players. His symbolic capital was previously accumulated from a public school education (Dulwich College), attendance at Durham University, and his clerical status. He was later a Canon in the Church of England. He had one of the shortest BBC commentating careers due to severe press criticism.

The five 2Lo running commentaries on athletics events in 1927 were all handled by ex-Repton and Cambridge University British champion and Olympic silver medal sprinter, Harold Abrahams.[71] For boxing's single running commentary, the Teddy Baldock –World Bantamweight Champion - versus Willie Smith (South Africa) fight on 3 October from the Albert Hall, the narrators were Eugene Corri and Bohun Lynch.[72] Their combined capital appears to form one version of the ideal: Corri, the son of a music professor, was a high level sport practitioner as a highly distinguished referee and Lynch's vast enthusiasm for the boxing exhibited in books, articles and caricatures on the subject including his *The Prize Ring* which had appeared the previous year. Lynch, the son of a naval commander, had had a "first class" education at Haileybury and University College, Oxford.

[70] Quentin Gilbey, *Fun Was My Living, A contented autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), 2.
[71] Abrahams attended three public schools: Bedford, St. Paul's and Repton. Norris McWhirter, 'Abrahams, Harold Maurice', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2011), https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30743.
[72] "Death of Mr. Bohun Lynch," *The Times*, October 3, 1928, 12.

Though Sieveking suggests he was in control of his choices, they were inscribed by the BBC as it had been socially constructed. Built on elitist ideology, it was merely 'common sense' to select dominant class individuals to broadcast on the sports of or enjoyed by the same class. Meritocratic selection based on Sieveking's perception of raw talent seems to have been discounted as it was in other British institutions run by the dominant class or 'ruling classes'. Thus, the already established norm was to seek expert knowledge and sporting experience was allied to social distinction, especially where the sporting event itself was linked to social prestige. The shared habitus of BBC staff and those at the apex of sporting bodies was an important lubricant. The negotiations surrounding the boat race broadcast shows this clearly as does the function of shared habitus in enabling fast decision-making within tight time schedules.[73] The first Wimbledon commentaries also illustrate the connectivity of class at work in such transactions. According to Wakelam, "When the B.B.C. rang up Major Larcombe of the All England LTC. to ask if he would put forward any names for the job of commentator, on the strength of my umpiring experience he very kindly suggested me, which of course suited the B.B.C. book..."[74] For a partner "They...decided upon Colonel R. H. Brand," then a member of staff at Savoy Hill, as an announcer and "a well-known tournament player and an umpire too."[75] This was an ideal nexus of ideal credentials: sporting experience, approval of the sporting body, social privilege and BBC staffer.

After the 15 January Twickenham founding event, a wave of live sports commentaries spread over the entire network, from Plymouth to Aberdeen. Within six weeks thirty matches had been broadcast live (twenty-four soccer; six rugby union). Again, quite often the press listing of the programmes did not include the commentator, emphasising the knowledge gap mentioned above. Cardiff, for example, printed no commentator names at all seven of their

[73] See WAC R30/135/1, The Boat Race.
[74] H. T. B. Wakelam, *Half Time!* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1938), 221.
[75] Ibid.

rugby running commentaries of 1927. Their sole 1928 live narration was executed by L. J. Corbett, the rugby international who played sixteen times for England. His high status – he captained his country in 1927 – overrode his not being Welsh, it seems. Corbett also played cricket for Gloucestershire. He went on to write for the dominant class newspaper the *Sunday Times* while forging a successful business career.[76] He made Cardiff's two remaining live commentaries before the regional scheme arrived and took part in a discussion programme in March 1929 with a new addition to the roster, Rowe Harding, a former Cambridge University captain and a seventeen cap Welsh international, recently retired, "an inspiring leader," according to *Radio Times*.[77] The previous year he began studying law at Cambridge en route to becoming a barrister.

The cache of press reports of early commentaries at the BBC Written Archive closes just one aperture of knowledge through an article on the live broadcast of a 1927 Leicester City match. The two commentary box workers were Nottingham station director E. L. Guildford, supervising the production, and E. W. Bourne, editor of the *Leicester Mercury*, commentating. In the light of George Allison and Rex Kingsley's class background we cannot assume Bourne – "formerly well known to the sporting world as 'Albion'" - to have been a member of one fraction or other of the bourgeoisie. Given the biographies we do have of early station directors chosen or approved by Reith, Guildford, it may be presumed, was "educated."[78]

Through 1928 and 1929 policy and practice continued uninterrupted. In terms of live commentaries at national level there was little change in the personnel in the following three

[76] Martin Williamson, "Len Corbett," accessed October 8, 2016, http://en.espn.co.uk/england/rugby/player/2778.html.
[77] *Radio Times*, January 19, 1929, 106.
[78] WAC P502/2, Broadcasting Press Cuttings, Outside Broadcast Book 8, 1927-8.

years: Wakelam covered all rugby internationals, Allison all the important football matches, Brand and Wakelam saw to Wimbledon and Abrahams narrated all athletics events. Without an explicit policy being stated, the Written Archive contains many documents revealing the desire to use the same people repeatedly in letters and memos. Such changes as did occur reinforced the hegemony of the ex-public schoolboy and 'Varsity product. As stated, Geoffrey Gilbey commentated on the 1928 National, assisted by his fellow Old Etonian brother Quentin who left an immediate post-war career in banking for racing journalism, but his initial BBC career proved to be brief. Though his feature article on the first Derby broadcast suggested strong support from the Head of Outside Broadcasting, Gerald Cock, the 1928 Derby was relayed by Lyle who thence became fixture racing commentator on the few other events the Corporation was prepared to present: the St. Leger from Doncaster and, from 1928, the Northumberland Plate, the so-called "Pitman's Derby" run at Gosforth Park near Newcastle. He was educated at Felsted public school and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. His sporting credentials were impressive. "At [Felsted] he won his cap for hockey and captained the cricket team; at Cambridge he was a member of the Cambridge University Wanderers and of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society."[79] His love of sport took him into journalism, a fairly well-trodden career path for gentlemen by this period, and a respectable one too. He worked "... general reporter on the *Daily Express*, he took up the sporting side of journalism and became associated with the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Observer.*"[80] He was appointed sports editor on *The Times* after a war in which he "served in France...and was twice mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Military Cross and Bar."

[79] Capt. Robert Lyle, *Royal Newmarket* (London: Puttnam & Co., London, 1945), Introduction, ix.
[80] Ibid. Lyle's war record is either odd or remarkable. Long-time cricket commentator Brian Johnston much later reported, "Believe it or not he was said to be colour-blind, so how he picked out the horses I just don't know." Brian Johnston, *Another Slice of Johnners* (London: Virgin, London, 2001), 7.

The commentary baton of the Boat Race was passed to George Wansbrough for 1928 and 1929. His credentials were very similar to those of Nickalls: he coxed the Cambridge boat in 1925. An old Etonian, after Cambridge he went into banking, "achieving a meteoric rise in the City."[81] The pervasiveness of the requirement of voices of "dignity and status" in mediating sport in this period is evidenced by the choice of commentator for the first Rugby League Challenge Cup Final played at Wembley and broadcast for the first time on 2Lo in 1929, the referee and ex-Huddersfield forward Rev. Frank H. Chambers. His qualifications almost met the Reithian ideal. As a man of the cloth, a Methodist, he represented respectability while mediating, in the eyes of many dominant class individuals, an un-gentlemanly, proletarian, professional sport. He was also an ex-grammar school boy, but according to the *Yorkshire Post* he had there "come under the influence of Rev. F. Marshall," his headmaster, an "apostle of muscular Christianity and scourge of the 'veiled professional'" as a leading official in the Yorkshire Rugby Union. As the decade ended, the Rev. Chambers may be seen as emblematic of BBC continuity of Reith's ideological mission to achieve to give even the tough, physical game of the northern proletariat a patina of respectability, the august setting of the Empire stadium, Wembley assisting him.

The BBC continued to deny what Bourdieu has called "social conditions of possibility" for the non-"educated" in these three years.[82] Only the career of George Allison, the BBC's primary soccer commentator for more than a decade represents a breach in the dominant class hegemony of early national station live commentators. His biography forms a good example of early twentieth century upward social mobility, his vertical trajectory taking place through his chosen profession, journalism. As such he can be placed in the same group as Arthur

[81] Alix Hickman, *A History of Hinton House*, accessed November 20, 2019, http://www.kingsworthy.hants.sch.uk/_files/Permanent%20reference/School%20history/F84B839F753FE5BFABE7B2018D8D1010.pdf.
[82] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 214.

Burrows and to some extent Arthur Lloyd James, from 1926 an original member of the BBC's Advisory Committee on Speech.[83] These cases show the British system of social exclusivity practiced by dominant class institutions was not absolute. But they do not disclose the existence of barriers which were enormously difficult to breach without appropriate amounts of specific types of symbolic capital. However, the exposure of the almost total universalism of sports mediator practices of the BBC is capable of doing that.

Allison's early BBC career trajectory closely resembled Wakelam's, quickly becoming popular and generating a considerable amount of fan mail. He was born in the small northern village of Hurworth-on-Tees in 1883, the son of a publican and later, county court bailiff.[84] He attended a church primary school in Stockton of no distinction. He progressed to a bourgeois position as a company director via a career in journalism and a love of soccer which comprised playing and administrating, firstly as assistant to the secretary-manager of Middlesbrough FC (circa 1904) before hunger for advancement took him to London to develop his journalism career. Here he attached himself to the club of the highly ambitious Sir Henry Norris, who moved a mediocre Division Two club, Woolwich Arsenal, to the Highbury inner suburb north of the Thames. In 1911 Allison was sufficiently daring to phone Lord Kitchener at home with a piece of news regarding an American rowing team and to then interrupt his dinner at a top London hotel.[85] This impressed the latter sufficiently for him to recommend him to a contact which saw Allison becoming *New York Post*'s London correspondent. Sixteen years later, now a middle-aged Arsenal director, Allison was recruited by Lance Sieveking. Recordings from the early 1930s and press reports on his first commentaries confirm that he used the tactic of accent correction to acquire an essential

[83] Lloyd James's father was a coal mine manager in South Wales and obtained his French degree at University College, Wales.
[84] 1881, 1891, 1901 Census Returns.
[85] Allison, *Allison Calling*, Chapter One (page number not available).

component of dominant class habitus, accent itself being a form of social and cultural capital.[86] His mannered timbre and diction, suggestive of a manufactured hyper-corrected accent, for example in the pronunciation of such words as "Wembley", "you" and "goal", allowed him to pass on air as an educated Englishman to the vast majority of the 'uneducated' classes it may safely be assumed.[87] And given Allison's accumulated capital from his rise to a football company directorship, which clearly held value at the BBC, this veneer of gentleman status, plus his perceived competence in the opinion of the influential Sieveking and for good measure his public popularity, was sufficient to hold him in place as principal soccer commentator on the prestige national station for more than a decade.

The second key development in sports broadcasting in 1927 was the advance of the eye-witness account of a sporting event. This method of sports broadcasting now flourished. The fifteen or twenty minute account, effectively a talk but simultaneously also a piece of news reportage, was considered an excellent substitute for live commentary, becoming a staple of sports broadcasting through to the Second World War. During 1928 there were EWAs in soccer, rugby union, lawn tennis, rowing, golf, hockey, athletics, motor racing, motor rallying, motor cycling, motor boat racing and yachting. At the end of 1929 bridge, rugby league and boxing could be added to the list.

The deployment of eye-witness reporting meant that cricket could now rescue itself from the problems of initially failing to use the running commentary form successfully. Periodic descriptive, summative reporting proved to be far more effective than random visits to live

[86] BBC Sound Archive DD04037133 WBA v Sheffield Wednesday F. A. Cup Final – April 1935. For an excellent analysis of "BBC English," see Lynda Mugglestone, *"Talking proper," The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 327-30.
[87] BBC Sound Archive 1CL0067250 Ass FAC 1934 Man City v. Portsmouth; DD04037133, WBA v Sheffield Wednesday F. A. Cup Final – April 1935.

action where very often little of interest happened.[88] Cricket's institutional social construction allied to BBC tone and character logically led to members of the social elite being invited to broadcast: the game was run by the public school-'Varsity caste; its teams were captained by members of it and the BBC found a healthy number of dominant class ex-players willing to accept the challenge. Within a month of the first running commentary, 'Plum' Warner became the sport's second commentator, at the Middlesex v. Nottinghamshire game at Lord's on June 11, his only broadcast in the role. By then Warner had made three talks and had given one eye-witness account (the same day as Gillingham's debut). As commentaries were rapidly abandoned he became the primary BBC cricket broadcaster for the 1927 season until Colonel Philip Trevor took his place. The latter made eleven reports and talks in 1928, one of them on rugby and six in 1929, sharing the work with Maurice K Foster. Trevor had suitable establishment credentials having served in the army in Burma, then in the Boer War and was assistant director of Ordinance Services in London during the 1914-18 war. By the time of his first broadcast in 1924 he was both rugby and cricket correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*. Foster was one of seven brothers who played cricket for Worcestershire. Like his siblings he was educated a Malvern school and like some of them, went on to Oxford University. He made one talk in 1927 before making fifteen broadcasts in 1929 – a large number. Nine of his ten talks were on *Children's Hour*; additionally he made the eye-witness accounts on the West Indies tests, and two soccer addresses in the autumn.

Savoy Hill looked for the same type to make national EWAs. Rugby used Howard Marshall and W. W. Wakefield in 1928 for the first time, public school and 'Varsity men both, in addition to Tosswill and O. L. Owen.[89] Eleanor Helme led women's golf broadcasting, giving

[88] Jack Williams, *Cricket and Broadcasting* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 11.
[89] Marshall was educated at Haileybury and Oriel, Oxford (See Howard Marshall's staff file at WAC). Wakefield was ex-RAF, educated at Sedbergh and Pembroke College, Cambridge (See *Radio Times*, December 30, 1927, 743).

four accounts (and one talk) in 1927, a pattern repeated in 1928 and to a lesser extent in 1929. Helme, England international golfer from 1910-13 and in 1920, authored nearly thirty books on golf, nature and, famously, young fiction on ponies. Her sporting memoir portrays vividly the socially elitist nature of ladies golf in the period.[90]

Other individuals were less dominant in other sports. "Ompax" and "Ixion" are two examples of those who used the *nom de plume* still characteristic of sports journalism in this period. "Ompax" was the rugby correspondent of the extremely successful *Glasgow Evening Citizen*. He made seventeen talks in the 1925 and 1926 on the Glasgow station, his programme title being merely, "Rugby".[91] The only indication of his social class available to this researcher aside from his authorship of a book, *Rugby – The Game*, in 1927, is the fact that its foreword was written by ex-Fettes and Cambridge student K. G. MacLeod. "Ixion" of the "*The Motor Cycle*" magazine gave five eye-witness accounts from June 1927 to June 1929, four of them as the BBC's representative at the Manx TT races. *Radio Times* in promoting his debut promised an account "by an expert, whose names carries weight in all the circles where motor-cycle racing and production are discussed."[92] "Ixion" was the Reverend Basil Henry Davies BA, "the duality [of his two] identities being known to only a few in the motor cycle press and his family..."[93] Davies's father was born to a joiner/craftsman and daughter of a brick manufacturer. "Ixion" was educated at Manchester Grammar School, Clifton College and Lincoln College, Oxford.

[90] "Eleanor Helme," *A Luccombe Miscellanea*, accessed April 21, 2018, http://www.spanglefish.com/luccombeanditsweather/index.asp?pageid=507624.
[91] *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, January 29, 1927.
[92] *Radio Times*, June 10, 1927, 486.
[93] David Masters, *"Ixion" of the Motor Cycle – The Fiery Wheel (The First Motor Cycle Diarist) – The Life and Times of Canon Basil H Davies BA* (Privately published, 2014), 4.

There is ample evidence that in the provinces the stations followed corporation policy, sourcing mediators who offered expertise capital via ex-participant sportsmen (and occasionally women) to make reports where their understanding of the play was in little doubt. Where biographical details are available individuals brought symbolic capital via positions of administrative authority such as secretaries, chairmen and presidents of local sports bodies. In the case of rugby union, the Belfast office used authority figures such as international referee, Wallace Harland. A. R. Foster, President of the Northern Branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union was also used. The Scotland station is notable for relying on local sports journalists for the bulk of their sports reporting and 'Old International' for some soccer reporting, Cardiff for the continued use of trusted broadcasters L. E. Williams, Leigh Woods and A. S. Burge. This trio virtually dominated Cardiff's sports output in the late twenties. Burge monopolised rugby union talks which were an almost weekly occurrence. A Great War army captain, big match rugby referee and member of the Welsh Rugby Union, he offered much symbolic capital. The Manchester station used Stacey Lintott for almost all its diminishing amount of sports output caused by the Football League's ban of live commentaries and an unaccountable lack of enthusiasm for sports programmes across its huge geographical space. A number of individuals are for the moment obscure leaving an analysis of social class and BBC mediators necessarily incomplete. However, they are few enough in number to little blur the picture of the hegemony of the socially privileged in the selection or invitation criteria described here.

To this must be added the strong evidence that the need of many from below the ranks of the 'educated' to ape the accent of the English gentleman at school, at work and in certain social situations, cut across all regions of Britain, especially those who desired upward class trajectory. The evidence is far from complete, but the aim of the lower classes to "talk

proper" had sufficient cultural force as a social idea that it has to be assumed that many broadcasters whose personal biographies did not include even attendance at a grammar school came to the microphone enunciating some version of what they understood to be dominant class speech. Unfortunately, the paucity of recordings at the BBC Sound Archive makes a detailed study of the subject exceptionally difficult.

In the first three years of the BBC as a public corporation, sports talk policy did not depart from the ideological position Reith had formerly established. Head of Talks during this period was still Hilda Matheson and though she was to resign in 1931 in a clash with Reith over the moral aesthetic of literature on the air, there was no sign that she dissented with him over the imperative of talks meeting his desire for ideas, opinion and information delivered with an authority only dominant class men and women could summon. Sport as a subject enjoyed no separate status so no exception to Reithian ideas was experienced by the listener. The heft members of the aristocracy could add to the amount of social and cultural capital of speakers reflected Reith's conception of his broadcasting machine directly. Lord D'Abernon, Chairman of the LTA in 1927 gave a pre-Wimbledon talk on lawn tennis. The son of a Baronet and sometime MP, he was the Ambassador to Berlin from 1920 to 1926, the year in which he became a Viscount. In June 1927 *A Bridge Hand* was played by Lady Oxford, the wife of ex-Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, now an Earl, with friends, at their weekend house at Sutton Courtenay in Oxfordshire, broadcast on 2Lo. In May 1928, *A Hand of Bridge* was played on the same station by Lord Leitrim, Lady Morrison-Bell, Lady Ridley and Lord Queensbury. Further afield Leeds offered Sir Theodore Piggott contributed to *A Hand at Auction Bridge* (July 1927), with the Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Leeds also at the table, underlining the difference in ambition between London and the localities. Lord Rochdale, ex-Cambridge University first class cricketer, now chairman of the British

Olympic Association, made one of the few talks in the 1920s on the Olympic Games. Lady Ankaret Jackson made a talk on 'Rock Climbing' in November 1928 on 2Lo. The baronet Stuart Gordon Lowe gave three 2Lo talks on lawn tennis in 1928 and 1929, an outstanding player who won a number of titles either side of the war. In March 1929 the Scottish peer, Colonel the Master of Sempill, "it [was] hoped" would give an eye-witness account of his experience in the King's Cup Air Race."[94] In this case, the sport selected the social class of the broadcaster. Air racing was a sport for the wealthy, organised primarily by and for military or ex-military flying enthusiasts, as borne out by Air Vice Marshal Sir Sefton Brancker's preview on the Schneider Trophy contest and Squadron-Leader W. Helmore and Flight-Lieut. R. L. Ragge covering the commentator roles. Ten individuals bearing the high social marker of a knighthood were selected to speak in these three years also.

Sporting champions were better represented in this period than earlier in the decade. They often brought social capital too, especially where sports of the socially privileged were concerned. It was abundant in some cases. In March 1928 on 2Lo, "Captain Malcolm Campbell, holder of the World's Motor Speed Land 'record' and first winner of the Sir Charles Wakefield Trophy," was saluted in speeches by Wakefield, the founder of Castrol oil and soon to be raised to the peerage by the MacDonald government in 1930 and ex-Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks, at the Connaught Rooms. Other examples are readily available in the period. To list the most obvious of those from 1927: Tom Wilson, the Scottish Professional Golf Champion (talk on 'British and American Golf' (Glasgow, July); Tom Aitken (billiards) (Edinburgh, January); Herbert Chapman, late of three-time soccer league champions, Huddersfield Town (2Lo, March); cyclist William Bailey (2Lo, April) and master batsman Walter Hammond, (2Lo, August). In addition, many perceived "experts" of lesser renown were invited to fulfil the aim of a high-prestige operation in the provinces.

[94] *Radio Times*, June 28, 1929, 698.

Opportunities for women to hear their own gender talking about sport on the BBC were extremely limited despite the increase in the numbers of women playing lawn tennis, golf and hockey in an expanding number of clubs.[95] Programme makers in London still searched for elite performers in the sports of the privileged for talks, women such as Dorothea Lambert Chambers (2Lo, May 1927), seven-times Wimbledon Ladies Champion and Evelyn Collyer, twice runner-up at Wimbledon and the French Open (2Lo, September 1928). Hockey was the most broadcast sport by women. Its cohort of speakers included K. Doman, a games lecturer at Dartford PT College, ex-PT teacher at Roedean and England hockey captain and lacrosse international who gave a talk on foreign touring (2Lo, 9 February 1929), Mrs. V. A. Bridge, another international, "the most famous centre-forward the game has produced" according to *Radio Times* (2Lo, November 1928) and Marjorie Pollard, who began a significant broadcasting career giving six talks on hockey in late-1928 and 1929.[96] Pollard was an outstanding hockey player for Northamptonshire and England across almost two decades.[97] As a cricket administrator she drove the sport forward with unstinting energy and force. Air racer Miss Winifred Brown gave an eye-witness account of the Manchester-Liverpool race in August 1929 on the Manchester station. Winner of the prestigious King's Cup in 1928, she was ignored by the national station. Noted by one newspaper as a motorist, she also kept goal for Lancashire's women's hockey team.[98] She was of bourgeois stock, the daughter of a wealthy Cheshire butcher.[99] Another making just one broadcast was Fay Taylour, an outstanding dirt track motor cyclist and speedway rider, gave one talk in 1929. She was an

[95] Mike Huggins and Jack Williams, *Sport and the English* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 88-94.
[96] *Radio Times*, November 16, 1928, 477.
[97] Judith Wilson, "Pollard, Marjorie, Ann (1898-1982)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-65061.
[98] *Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter*, January 18, 1929.
[99] *Cheshire Life*, June 5, 2013, https://www.cheshirelife.co.uk/people/the-life-and-times-of-pioneer-winifred-brown-from-sale-brought-to-life-in-new-book-1-2220760.

Irish gentry product and in the 1930s was a prominent member of the National Union of Fascists. She was interned during the Second World War.[100]

The year 1929 saw women broadcasting again just 5% of a total of 450 core broadcast items.[101] These covered just eight sports: hockey; athletics, badminton, bridge, camping, golf, hiking, physical training/fitness and motor racing, in addition to three pastimes and leisure activities, hiking, playground games and camping. Though not all names are recoverable, there is no indication that any of the mediators, discussing dominant class activities, were not members of that class. In the post-war era the sporting woman was typically educated at the female analogue of the male public school. Thus they were endowed with the same social and cultural capital and displayed the same or similar habitus features as the dominant class men who made the vast majority of talks during this period.

Sport was brought into the scope of academic discussions and talks in the twenties, if only sporadically. In November 1925 "A Discussion between "Prof. T. H. Pear, MA, B.Sc. and Dr. Stanley H. Jackson, M.A., Ph. D" entitled 'Are Athletes Intellectual?' took place. Pear also made two addresses on 'Winter sports as a psychologist sees it', first in skating then in skiing (December 1927). Most notably, in spring 1928, from Savoy Hill, Professor A. V. Hill gave a series of six talks on 'Speed, Strength and Endurance in Sport'. The following year Pear broadcast on 'Nerve in Sport' from Manchester. Occasionally they were participants. Prof. G. I. Finch spoke on 'Climbing the Alps' (2Lo, June 1929) and Prof. J. E. A. Steggall on cycling (Dundee, January 1929). The previously discussed Philip Noel Baker's professorial status in London was always displayed in official listings. The incorporation of

[100] Paul D'Orléans, "From Glorious to Notorious, the Fay Taylour Story" (2017), *The Vintagent*, https://thevintagent.com/2017/10/03/from-glorious-to-notorious-the-fay-taylour-story/.
[101] "Core" – i.e., all types of sports broadcast bar sports bulletins (no sports reports attached to news bulletins were listed in that year). If we include the 430 sports bulletins broadcast in 1929, where no evidence has been found that any were broadcast by women the figures fall to 2.6% and 3.4%.

sport into academic discussion and discourse inscribed the culture of the social elite further into radio output as it fulfilled Reith's philosophy of bringing "everything that was best" within range of the everyday experience of the bulk of the population.[102]

Finally, the visibility of those carrying military capital among mediators was still strong in the late-twenties. Among familiar names, Vernon Brook, Tosswill, Cooper-Hunt, Brand, Wakelam, Lyle and A. S. Burge were regularly listed with a military rank pre-fix attached. The harnessing of the reflective power of war symbology to Reith's attempt to cement the BBC's national status is clearly in evidence in programming and *Radio Times*' programme notes. Sport was firmly a part of this endeavour, whether accidentally or otherwise. Though 1923-25 was the peak period of the military pre-fix (forty-two individual mediators), between 1926 and 1929 the average of new such mediators was a fraction over ten per annum. Between 1922 and 1929, eighty-four are identifiable, where the true figure may well be higher: around five per cent of programmes did not notify the audience of the mediator used. Though some sports had direct connections to the armed forces such as equestrianism and air racing, the military-attached lawn tennis, rugby union or cricket commentator is emblematic of a 1920s BBC thoroughly dominant class in tone and substance.

Conclusion

This empirical study of BBC output in the 1920s produces a number of largely verifiable conclusions. Its findings show that Reith's staff recruitment system did indeed extend to organisation's mediators. The primary years of BBC radio sport clearly illustrate Reith's desire to achieve "recognition and opportunity" for the organisation as he strove to elevate the Company's status by ensuring that only those with "first class qualifications" in terms of symbolic capital possession spoke to the audience. Indeed, the national obsession with sport

[102] By 1939 still one third of the working class did not own a radio. McKibbin, *Classes & Cultures*¸ 457.

enabled it to be exploited to meet his purposes. Such rational thinking and action, however, is to see things in the light Reith himself projected onto his role within the national broadcasting system. More precisely, Reith's construction of the BBC was coterminous with his attempt to achieve its social sanctioning: for the BBC as a conceptual framing of a national broadcasting system to be accepted by the social forces and institutions that placed the responsibility of leadership upon him. The broadcasting committee, the Postmaster-General and Parliament were the constituted authorities Reith felt – quite rightly – that he needed to satisfy in order to reach his goals. In his construction of "BBC radio sport" in terms of its mediating individuals, it has been shown that up to the end of 1929 he succeeded in creating a system whereby members of the nation's dominant class carried out this work at the microphone. Their "polish", their syntax and accent, deeply significant strands of the habitus of the typical dominant class member, lent an authority to their voices which, Reith believed, would establish the BBC as an institution with a distinctive character that would be acceptable not just to his own conception of how British broadcasting should be carried out, but to his fellow dominant class employers.

In Bourdieusian terms the sub-field of sports mediators produces not dominating and dominated classes but primarily a field of players in a game where gaining entry to the field is the aim. Power differentials between individual mediators/players competing for status and honour may be seen as a secondary issue. This conceptualisation effectively illuminates BBC praxis. Individuals, once their social class is uncovered, now can be visibly grouped to form a clearly defined pattern of inclusion. Bourdieu's theory of capital is also highly powerful in illustrating how players won their ticket of entry.[103] Revealed now is how sporting expertise, knowledge, experience, honour and status are converted into symbolic capital, explaining their invitation to broadcast. But as the findings above amply demonstrate, two other forms of

[103] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 118.

symbolic capital, social and cultural, were, in almost all instances, also prime requirements for an entry ticket. Thus was a cohort of sports mediators was constructed between 1923 and 1929.

Chapter Three: BBC Sport and Social Class: The First Radio Sport Live Running Commentary: Case Study

> "It can be said without contradiction that the broadcast description of the England v. Wales match at Twickenham constituted one of the most important events since the inception of broadcasting in this country, marking as it did the beginning of a new era in wireless, at all events on this side of the Atlantic."[1] *Radio Times*, January 1927.

> "The new definition of elite or gentlemanly status depended not so much on birth or on wealth alone as on education, which distinguished those who had only an elementary schooling from the sons of the upper middle classes...."[2] Richard Holt.

> "I particularly enjoyed Cambridge May Week."[3] Lancelot Sieveking, talking of his work organising running commentaries in 1927.

> "To be a 'gentleman' is *the* thing...all or mostly all worship athleticism."[4] Walter Le Strange, 1920

The Case for the Case Study

This chapter takes the form of a case study investigating the socially constructed programme building practices at the BBC via the organisation and execution of a single event: the first live sports running commentary of 15 January, 1927 on the international rugby union match between England and Wales at Twickenham rugby ground. The case study method has been chosen for the focus of a thesis chapter because of the advantages it offers to the researcher of the object, the inter-war BBC, a period exceptionally rich in action, activity, meaning and significance. One advantage of the micro-nature of the case study lies in testing theories and conclusions as part of the analysis of the wider object. If answers to important questions are valid, micro-analysis of a single event within the designated chronological structure should

[1] *Radio Times,* January 28, 1927, 199.
[2] Richard Holt, *Sport and the British* (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 113.
[3] Paul Sieveking, *Airborne, Scenes From the Life of Lance Sieveking, Pilot, Broadcaster, Author* (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2013), 173.
[4] Diary of Walter Le Strange, quoted in Cyril Connelly, *Enemies of Promise* (London: Penguin, 1961), 223.

support earlier conclusions, explain them more clearly or more fully and expose new attendant issues.

This method is used in a wide variety of disciplines, including but not limited to, medicine, education and social sciences. In phenomenological sociology the case study, according to Cresswell and Cresswell (citing Stake and Yin), is a qualitative method of inquiry "...in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals."[5] Further defining the case study, "Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time."[6] This study uses a variety of data, albeit a narrow one, and though source-limited it is still able to fulfil the expectation of observing and analysing a specific phenomenon as a single, integrated whole in case study theory.[7] The phenomenon in this case consists of an integrated set of events: Sieveking's commentator trial; the trial essay by the chosen narrator, Teddy Wakelam; the decision-making process of Sieveking in terms of organising the event on the day; the execution of the event itself and, briefly, the reaction to it. Jill Russell, Trish Greenhalgh and Saville Kushner argue for the value of the case study as "a celebration of the particular and the personal narrative, a concern to explore not simply 'what works' but 'how things work' and 'what is going on'." In this case study, the research exercise explores "what worked," "how things worked" and "what went on" in the organising and execution of the first live sports running commentary.[8] The inclusion of a narrative of events in the first part of the study, much of which is in the words of the two participants, is crucial in laying out a selection of actions and

[5] John Cresswell and J. David Cresswell, *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (Los Angeles, London: Sage, 2014), 43.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Yves-Chantal Gagnon, *The Case Study as Research Method, A Practical Handbook* (Quebec: Presses de Université de Quebec, 2010), 2.
[8] Jill Russell, Trisha Greenhalgh and Saville Kushner, eds., *Case Study Evaluation: Past, Present and Future Challenges* (Bingley: Emerald, 2015), xix.

considerations which are not widely known and without which it is not possible for the reader to follow the analysis and evaluation of them.

As stated above, in this unit of analysis two sources of data are drawn on principally: firstly, the autobiography of its chief organiser, BBC staffer Lancelot Sieveking, which contains his version of the events that transpired in the devising of the broadcast and his production of the event itself.[9] A group of vital quotes on his early BBC career are used from the same sources to procure knowledge of his personal set of dispositions, attitudes and feelings concerning his class position: his habitus. While the testimony is not densely packed with facts it is the most detailed record of any BBC sports broadcast during the inter-war period. A second, shorter but similar record has been left by the chosen commentator, Teddy Wakelam.[10] This affords further insight into the construction of the broadcast. It is principally Sieveking's testimony which allows us to closely inspect a BBC staffer's decision-making process comprising around a dozen key choices.[11] Given that the construction of the staff cohort was carried out with close attention to the social class attachment of prospective employees and that most of its sports mediators to this date has already been clearly established in this thesis, this case study will assess the extent to which the first live sports commentary event mirrors the Reithian staffing system and will investigate how class relations shaped and informed the broadcast.

The Genesis of the Event

As we have already seen, John Reith from the outset wanted to be able to mediate live sport to the audience. But the advent of radio broadcasting caused a virtual panic among newspaper

[9] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*; WAC S61 ASOLS L. Sieveking, "Autobiographical Sketches of Lance Sieveking." Here the radio broadcasting sense of "production" is used, not the sociological one.
[10] H. T. B. Wakelam, *Half Time!* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1938), 186-96.

proprietors and the news-gathering companies, principally Newspaper Proprietors Association, the Newspaper Society, Reuters Ltd., the Press Association, the Exchange Telegraph Company, and Central News.[12] Convinced that the spread of broadcasting would inevitably wreck profits, they quickly formed themselves into a lobby group to pressurize successive Coalition, Labour and Conservative governments into preventing the new BBC from conveying news of any description to its audience. Despite pressure from Reith, regularly lobbying successive Postmasters Generals, Lord Liddell, representing the NPA, was implacable in his opposition and was able to maintain support for his position from both Conservative and Labour governments.[13] The NPA failed in an outright ban on news broadcasts, though they pressed for one, but managed, however, to limit the number of bulletins and have these placed in the evening, after home-bound workers had had the full opportunity to purchase evening newspaper editions.

Reith, a keen sports lover himself, with his insatiable early hunger to build the Company, pushed back at the NPA. In early 1924, after the Sykes Committee "had recommended that 'under safeguards' the BBC should be allowed to broadcast news of special outside events 'without regard to the hour'"[14] he again pressed the Postmaster General, the source of executive power in the matter of permission to broadcast public speeches and ceremonies by the great and the good as well as descriptions of the Boat Race, the Cup Final and the Epsom Derby, before 7pm and "'narratives by experts from the studio in the late evening.'"[15] The PMG made almost no concessions.[16] When at a meeting on 20 February 1925 the BBC specifically raised four broadcasting proposals, including a "running story of the first half of

[12] Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume II, The Golden Age of Wireless* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 153.
[13] Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume One, 1922-1939, Serving the Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 25.
[14] Asa Briggs, *The BBC, The First 50 Years* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 71.
[15] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 263.
[16] Briggs, ibid. Briggs quotes Reith's demands without referencing the source. Reith made his representation to a conference of BBC and press representatives on 11 February, 1924.

the England versus Scotland Rugby Match," Reith received a flat rejection.[17] Appeals to the PMG again failed. By this time British broadcasting was lagging badly behind its European and transatlantic counterparts in terms of sports radio, creating further pressure on Reith and the Company to catch up. Australia had broadcast Test cricket in 1922 and had established ball-by-ball commentary by 1924. French radio broadcasted a Carpentier fight in 1923 and international rugby in January 1924. In March 1923, the first Canadian ice hockey running commentary was broadcast, while later that year another Dempsey title fight had been broadcast to Buenos Aires, Argentina. In the face of this embarrassment for British national broadcasting, the only concession the press was prepared to allow the BBC was "...only that the BBC could be at Epsom for the Derby and that the sound of the hoofs and the shouts of the crowd could be transmitted."[18]

The cost of the OB restrictions was evident in the attempt the Company made to make a Derby broadcast in 1926, when even in the severely wet conditions of that year it was attended, according to 'The Thunderer', by "many hundreds of thousands".[19] The result was a "fiasco" according to the *Manchester Guardian*, which only partly blamed the sodden conditions overhead and underfoot.[20] Scannell and Cardiff used the same term: "It rained solidly all day, and during the race, 'not only were there no sounds from the hoofs in the soft going, but even the bookies, tipsters and onlookers were more occupied in taking shelter under their umbrellas than in speeding home the winner.'"[21] Briggs notes generously, "The 1926 broadcast was hardly hailed by the critics as a success..."[22] The BBC's own sources

[17] Briggs, *First 50 Years*, 71.
[18] Dick Booth, *Talking of Sport*: *The Story of Broadcasting* (Cheltenham: Sports Books, 2008), 21. See Chapter Two, "Britain Lags Behind" for a detailed account of this.
[19] *The Times,* June 3, 1926.
[20] *Manchester Guardian,* June 2, 1927.
[21] Scannell & Cardiff, *Social History of Broadcasting*, 144, quoting *BBC Yearbook 1928*, 25-6.
[22] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 227.

reveal greater negativity; internal memos eleven months later consistently referred to it cynically or self-critically as merely a "stunt".[23]

A change of government mind occurred as a result of a turning point in the history of the Company produced by the General Strike of May 1926. A tumultuous event within an extremely turbulent period of British industrial relations, itself occurring within a period of acute difficulty for the post-war economy, the Strike was arguably the making of the BBC. By placing itself on the side of the government and against the strikers in its frequent daily news bulletins on the grounds that it was the BBC's duty to support the government of the day and accepting the dominant class's conceptualisation of the event as a constitutional crisis where a victory for the strikers would overturn the social, political and economic order, Reith won the gratitude of Prime Minister Baldwin.[24] The reward came in fruit borne of the government-instigated Crawford Report on the future of the BBC, published late in 1926. This recommended its transformation from private enterprise to public corporation. In terms of the future of Britain's broadcasting of news, the granting of public corporation status was a clear signal that the organisation had attained a new level of importance and prestige, what in simplified form many commentators and historians have described as "national status". This meant that it could no longer be held back by petty restrictions held in place by those in pursuit of profit in the field of the British press. This left the Corporation free to bring live sport to the listener.

The tension between these conflicting forces, then, was resolved in favour of Reith, though tight restrictions on the reading of news remained.[25] This paved the way for the first sports

[23] WAC R/30/812/1, The Derby and Oaks, File I, 1924-28 R30/812/1, memo June 4, 1926, Cock to Wade.
[24] See Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 363-84; Scannell & Cardiff, *Social History of Broadcasting*, 108-113. For Reith's account see John Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 107-109.
[25] See Briggs, *Golden Age of Wireless*, 153.

live running commentaries. But this new opportunity, in the distinct absence of previous experience and a rulebook, was also the immediate harbinger of a set of new problems: how was the narration to be organised and by whom? Who would provide a "narrative" of the event at the microphone? How many people who do it? And in what style would it be done?

Organising the Event

The sources outlining how the first running commentary was constructed are thin, a surprising fact given the very considerable attention given since to an important broadcasting "first". Researchers are almost entirely dependent upon a memoir written by the event's chief organiser, Lancelot Giberne Sieveking, in gaining access to information regarding the broadcast's practical construction, and it is to this man we now turn. Sieveking's distinguished BBC career was almost exclusively as a dramatist. Indeed, his development of the radio play made him a striking reputation in the field, most particularly through the success of experimental techniques in broadcasting the play, *Kaleidoscope* in 1928.[26] But it is he who, unnoticed even by historians of sport and by Briggs, initiated the first live sports commentaries.[27]

Sieveking early socialisation was within a dominant class family - metropolitan upper-middle class in more conventional class parlance - which endowed him with very considerable cultural and social capital. The fraction was literary-artistic and political via his mother's deep involvement at the highest levels in the London Suffragette movement of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. His first "friend" at the age of five was the novelist G. K. Chesterton, his godfather (then aged around twenty-six), who wore "loose, voluminous

[26] See, David Hendy, "Painting with Sound: The Kaleidoscopic World of Lance Sieveking, a British Radio Modernist," *Twentieth Century British History*, 24, no. 2 (June 2013), 169–200.
[26] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 80-1.
[27] Ibid.

black clothes...and a vast, crumpled black sombrero."[28] At six he was devising and writing plays performed in his toy theatre. His father, a bourgeois, a timber importer, spoke five languages and both parents were "well read." His father's circle was "Bloomsbury and Clubland."[29] He attended prep school but was withdrawn by his mother after a teacher made a disparaging remark about his mother's attachment to Suffragette politics. He had first gone "to an ultra-revolutionary avant-garde school: the co-ed establishment, West Heath School" before going to St. Leonard's Ladies College. At nine years of age he was the only boy there. "It was as if I were living in a fourth dimension, on another plane," he later wrote.[30] Aged fourteen he was thought to be too tall to go on to public school (unlike his brother). He was over six-foot in his early teens and thought by a doctor to "have outgrown his strength". Instead he was home educated. This included trips to Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Scotland with a Rev. Hawarth. Nearer home in 1911 he attended the Handel festival aged fourteen-fifteen, where he sat next to ex-Prime Minister Arthur Balfour. At sixteen he was dined and shown the socially risqué culture of Leicester Square by the journalist William James Wintle to whom he had sent stories and had received encouraging and detailed letters of reply. From the age of fifteen he was passionate about flying and spent a lot of time at the country's centre of this new form of transportation at Hendon Aerodrome. At eighteen he joined up and was placed in the Royal Naval Air Service, later on the Royal Flying Corps. He was shot down in combat and was imprisoned. In this incarcerated state he wrote many of the nonsense poems that formed his first book. At war's end he won a Distinguished Service Medal which he received at Buckingham Palace from George V – "the tiny bearded figure said a few words to me with a slight German accent and reached up."[31]

[28] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 17.
[29] Ibid., 39.
[30] L. Sieveking, *Autobiographical Sketches*, 7.
[31] L. Sieveking, ibid., 25.

His post–war biography is a blur of activity of a peripatetic nature but always in the milieu of the upper literary fraction of the dominant class. He first 'went up' to Cambridge in 1919 at twenty-three but 'came down' in his second year, not caring to complete his time or studies there. Whilst in attendance, however, he became involved in literary production, writing articles, poems and stories for polymath C. K. Ogden's *Cambridge Magazine* and soon afterwards acquired the *New Cambridge* magazine for £200, which he then edited. Simultaneously (according to his account) he then had two short-lived jobs: the first at the *Daily Express* thanks to a letter of introduction from Geoffrey Fry, a director of Fry's, the York chocolate firm and private secretary to both Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin; the second in a government tax office via the Cambridge Appointments board after failing to achieve a place in the Diplomatic Service.[32] The book of nonsense poems, illustrated by the surrealist painter Paul Nash and its foreword written by Chesterton was published in 1919, and in 1922 he wrote a novel called *Stampede* which was finished in India, where he served again with the RAF upon a request to help quell a rail strike. He then went to the South of France to write with friends Eric Maschwitz and Philip Furneaux Jordan ("Clement Attlee's P.R.O."[33]). In 1924 he married and settled in the heart of dominant class literary London, Bloomsbury, and moved in the main in literary circles until landing at the BBCo in 1926. Sieveking's account of his post-war pre-BBC life is liberally peppered, but not pretentiously, with upper-class and upper middle-class names, people he had met or known: Max Beerbohm; H. G. Wells; Lady Warwick; Clifford Bax; Maynard Keynes and Aleister Crowley, to name a few from the early-1920s. At the time of his joining the BBC his friendship network was extensive and, according to his account, exclusively dominant class and very largely those with abundant literary capital. "Joining the staff of the BBC," he said,

[32] P. Sieveking, ibid., 125-6.
[33] Ibid., 134.

"prevented my writing fifty or sixty novels."[34] Sieveking was rather inserted into the BBCo by his Cambridge *New Magazine* peer group in April 1926 (the year he had a novel published). The *New Magazine* had been edited by journalist, folk song revivalist and USA peace activist, Walter Fuller, who in 1924 joined the BBC from the *Westminster Gazette* to become the new editor of the *Radio Times*, a job he carried out to Reith's satisfaction until his death in September 1927.[35] Fuller, Ogden and author J. C. Squire (later a BBC Boat Race second commentator, as we have seen) urged him to seek an interview at Savoy Hill.[36] Sieveking's habitus and the connections he had built up over a relatively long period of time was his ticket to the dominant class enclave that was the BBCo in the spring of 1926.

Of his interview with Reith he records, "...he smiled genially and waved me to a chair facing the full light of the big window. Our conversation ranged over a number of subjects, and at one point he gave me a sudden sharp look and said: 'Tell me, are you exotic?' Guessing by the look and the tone, he meant was I homosexual. I replied, 'No'. That seemed to put his mind at ease, whatever he had meant."[37] He was then passed on to Carpendale. "This tall, bluff, genial man was a type I was familiar with. He asked me a few questions about my war service and life in general and, having sized me up, said I should be hearing from him, goodbye." The applicant shortly received a letter offering him an appointment assisting the Director of Education. On 15 April he became a member of staff at a salary of £600 per annum.

Lance Sieveking's employment at the BBCo was a function of the organisation's class-orientated practices. The sub-text of Sieveking's comment on Carpendale – "a type I was

[34] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 163.
[35] Peter Winnington, *Walter Fuller: The Man Who Had Ideas* ([Mauborget], Switzerland: The Letterworth Press, 2014); *The Times*, September 16, 1927, 13. "Mr. Walter Fuller."
[36] P. Sieveking, ibid., 144.
[37] Ibid., 145.

familiar with" – perfectly exemplifies Bourdieu's theories of habitus, capital and field. It speaks of Sieveking, now aged thirty, recognising a class equal and knowing how to conduct himself in an acceptable and agreeable fashion. This is a classic example of what Bourdieu called "swimming in water." Sieveking, in such a position, "held trump cards": his military experience; his accent and other dispositions of his class such as "...bodily hexis, pronunciation, dress or familiarity with legitimate culture, not to mention the whole set of specific competences."[38] For Bourdieu, "these function as admission tickets to the bourgeois world."[39] Sieveking's admission narrative fully supports Chapter Two's disclosure of a "Reithian System" of recruitment based totally on symbolic social and cultural capital. Though nominally assistant to the Director of Education, the fluid nature of the organisation's operational culture saw his role quickly expanding. "My title...covered practically everything short of conducting an orchestra."[40] This un-bureaucratized, unstructured framework within the cramped confines of the Savoy Hill offices led to an everyday looseness which suited one trait in Sieveking's personality. As official BBC chronicler Briggs has noted,

> ...the early staff of the BBC, like the broadcasters from outside, was an extraordinarily varied collection of people...a 'mixed Bohemian flock' with Reith as a strange but kindly shepherd.[41]

Sieveking can be categorised as one of these men and Maschwitz may have had him in mind when making this observation. He quite fits the descriptor 'Bohemian' but, as his pre-BBCo career testifies, he was a highly active individual. As he put it, "I was a dynamo – without

[38] Pierre Bourdieu & Loic Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Polity, 1992), 98.
[39] P. Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984), 84.
[40] L. Sieveking, *Autobiographical Sketches*, 43.
[41] Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 269; Eric Maschwitz, *No Chip On My Shoulder* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1957), 50; Carton de Wart was a famous military figure of the Boer and Great Wars and Cochran a noted theatrical impresario.

cunning. A fountain of ideas – without a political sense."[42] He was enabled by the tendency towards a flexible, unstructured praxis culture at Savoy House, including highly ambiguous demarcation lines between departments and individual roles within those. He saw his everyday task as being

> ...to try to create something out of the air: to experiment and have my experiments all paid for by my employers, who provided everything I needed in the way of technical collaboration and indeed the entire complicated organisation. I had only to ask and it immediately appeared.[43]

En route to becoming an expert in the art of writing and directing radio drama, two pieces of self-reflection develop this theme.

> During those first few years it was true to say of the microphone what the water rat in *The Wind in the Willows* said of his river; 'we lived by it and with it and on it and in it'. We lived in a perpetual atmosphere of fun and miracles.[44]

In his annual report on Sieveking, Roger Eckersley, a man who had rapidly ascended fluid hierarchical structures to reach Controller of Programmes via the position of Head of OB, indicated why Sieveking enjoyed such freedom:

> ...there is no doubt in my mind that here we have a very promising boy whose work at times may reach brilliance. He is distinctly temperamental, but at the same time has a

[42] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 175.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

> way of getting what he wants, and one whose talents, with a certain amount of guidance, can be used to very great advantage by us.[45]

Though more formal, the viewpoints largely support each other. As it soon transpired, his use to the company and to the future of broadcast sport was so great as to be historic. It is within this Reithian framework that he was beset with the task of organising the first live sports broadcast with a continuous narrative.

According to Sieveking, this job was given to him because his skill as a problem-solver had already been proven:

> I had no professional qualifications and in consequence I was in a superbly lucky position: *every time something turned up that had never been done before, they said 'Tell Sieveking to do it.'*[46]

The planning and organisation of the operation was divided into two parts: one, the engineering requirements of recording and transmitting live sound from Twickenham; two, organising the actual production of the narration, including the finding of a narrator, devising a methodology of narration and solving any production problems which might arise. The first part, by virtue of eliminating other possibilities, was supervised by the OB Head in January 1927, Gerald Cock, who had had come to the BBCo with a background in engineering.[47] He appears to have delegated powers of production to Sieveking, happily or otherwise. Roger Eckersley, Head of Programmes from 1925, may also have been involved. He commented in an internal memo exactly one week before the game:

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[45] Lancelot Sieveking's Staff File, Memo, R. H. Eckersley to J. Reith, April 1927.
[46] L. Sieveking, *Autobiographical Sketches,* 42; P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 146.
[47] Gerald Cock's Staff File at WAC.

> The man who does these things [running commentaries] properly probably will be difficult to find, as he should have the journalistic instinct, a decent voice, a sound communicable knowledge of the subject, and the power to make listeners feel as though they were present at the event.[48]

It is not known whether Sieveking saw the memo or spoke to Eckersley about it but it should be deemed highly likely, though it is odd that Sieveking did not mention such a discussion in his memoir. In the absence of evidence to the contrary it ought perhaps to be assumed that Sieveking got on with the job alone, without interference. This included the supremely important job of finding a narrator. At that time, none existed in the country.[49] He was apparently confident that this would be done. "I did not know then, and I do not know now, the rules of either rugger or soccer," he wrote, "but with the help of commonsense I did know how to set about finding people to do things - no matter what."[50]

Sieveking continued, "In the preceding weeks I got into contract with everyone I could think of who seemed in the remotest degree likely to be able to give a running commentary on a rugger match." This seems unlikely given the facts that the founding transmission took place on 15 January without the BBC audience being notified in either *Radio Times* or the newspapers on the day of the game and narrator trials not taking place until three days before. Describing these, he wrote, "I assembled a party of men. They were all connected with the game in some capacity, either amateur or professional and among them were several sporting journalists well known all over the country." This "party" was the second of its kind,

[48] Briggs, *Golden Age of Wireless*, 60, R. H. Eckersley to Station Directors, January 7, 1927.
[49] The term "commentator" quickly gained widespread acceptance in the months which followed the England v. Wales game, principally because this is the term the BBC itself used. "Delineator", "wireless reporter", "announcer," "radio reporter." "the official responsible for the commentaries," "broadcaster," "eye-witnesses" (Wakelam and Lapworth, by the *Daily Telegraph*) and "narrator" were all used by the press reporting the game in the sample examined for this chapter. Only the *Daily Telegraph* used "commentator."
[50] Sieveking's underlining. *Airborne*, 164-175 and *Autobiographical Sketches*, 50-54.

revealing the difficulty of his finding - for him - a suitable candidate, for, he "...had made a similar expedition to Blackheath a few days earlier in which each member of the party, one after the other, had proved himself unable to do anything even approximating to what was required."

A second test was organised, in Richmond Deer Park, where he'd discovered a school rugby football match was to take place. Engineers and their cables were connected; Sieveking, in a van, sat beside a loudspeaker and listened.

> I was, of course prepared for the journalists to talk in the same style in which some of them wrote: to be unable to refer to the ball as a ball and to make references about Jupiter Pluvius being a spoil-sport instead of saying that it was beginning to rain. But I was not prepared for the speechlessness that struck some of them down. I started with a celebrated journalist... He knew all there was to know about both kinds of football and all the personalities connected with it. We waited several minutes in silence. Then got something like this.
>
> Er - well - there's a - I should say, there's a - a little boy in a yellow-and-black jersey who's got the ball and he - no - er -No - that is, not the same boy - one of their - No." Each time he said 'No' it had a more hopeless and defeated note. I left him to it for a while, but he gradually became less and less articulate and finally gave up...One or two of the others made a better shot at it but none sounded in the least likely to be able to shape up to the task by the 15th January. I began to feel desperate.

At this point it is worth cross-referencing Sieveking's account with the commentator he found at Richmond that day: Teddy Wakelam.

> One afternoon I was sitting at my table...when my telephone rang. An unknown voice at the other end then asked me if I was the same Wakelam who had played Rugger for the Harlequins, and, upon my saying, "Yes," went on to inform me that the owner of it was an official of the British Broadcasting Corporation, who would much like to see me at once on an urgent matter.[51]

In 1952 Wakelam described the trial as a "dummy run"; it was not: it was an audition. The commentator trials were not, as Wakelam led the writer David Raevern Allen to believe, a "dummy run" for his Saturday appearance.[52]

> This led to a trial. The next day, three days before the actual match, together with Sieveking, a man called Lapworth, who had a vast knowledge of the American film world, and two other competitors, I went down to the Guy's ground as arranged, but alas, something had gone wrong, and no engineers or microphones turned up! This was a bad start; but things grew even worse when eventually we did find them, in Greenwich Park, watching a game between Blackheath Wednesday and the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, for no sooner had they started to get out their elaborate and fearsome-looking gear when up came a large and very important park-keeper, full of righteous indignation, and we departed sadder but considerably wiser men...we were asked by a most apologetic Sieveking to parade again the next day...

At Richmond the following day, Thursday, a second attempt was successful at "an inter-school affair, where the same party again assembled," once "the lines and so on had been run

[51] All Wakelam quotes here cited from: Wakelam, *Half Time!*, 188-191, unless otherwise stated.
[52] In David Rayvern Allen, *The Life of E. W. Swanton*, (London: Richard Cohen, 2000), 46, the author states: "The great Outside Broadcasts pioneer Lance Sieveking had then quickly seized the chance to send ex-Harlequin H. B. T. 'Teddy' Wakelam to Twickenham to commentate on the England v. Wales Rugby international."

out and fixed up.” Wakelam’s did not produce an account of his test and how he might have come to be asked to carry out the narration at Twickenham two days hence. Only Sieveking’s account survives. Again, its rarity and crucial importance in trying to understand Sieveking and the BBC’s 1927 practices requires it to be re-printed at this point:

> The last man was not a journalist and had never written a word about football or anything else and had never spoken in public. He sat watching the game for a long time. Then he said in a matter-of-fact tone 'I'll call the one team the Yellows and the other the Whites. There's not much going on at the moment. Sort of ding-dong messing about.' Suddenly his voiced changed and he called out sharply 'Hey, WAIT A MINUTE! That was something <u>like</u> a pass!' And then began that machine-gun delivery that has long been so familiar to millions of listeners. A real excitement and enthusiasm seemed to possess him, he jumped up and down on his chair and a positive cataract of words streamed out of his mouth ending in a happy roar: '- Go in boy! Go on boy, Pass! Pass now you - good! Oh, splendid! What a speed he's got! He'll do it - he won't - he will - he's stumbled - Go on! - Ah! Now! - pass, NOW!! That was a good pass. - He's going for the line - he's over! - Oh, good, it's a try! Jolly good! - Which of 'em's going to take the kick? ah - Now, will he convert? - Good KICK! He has!
>
> He was H. B. T. Wakelam, ex-captain of the Harlequins. With a broad grin on my face I went along to where he was sitting and tapped him on the shoulder. He stopped addressing the microphone and looked up.
>
> 'No good, eh?' he enquired, seeing my grin,

'Exactly what I'm looking for' I said. 'Will you do it?'

Wakelam: 'I agreed, subject, of course, to suitable financial remuneration, a point upon which both of us very naturally were quite at sea.'

Thus did the BBC find its first rugby and association football commentator: thirty-three year-old Captain E. W. T. Wakelam. Wakelam was not to become a full-time professional commentator but he quickly became a vital component in the Corporation's sports broadcasting machine as a freelancer.

The Broadcast

Sieveking's record of the broadcast of the game and in particular of Wakelam's performance, are of the utmost importance. Journalist accounts which record some of Wakelam's words are also of great value, but Sieveking's detailing, his sharpness of observation, his shoulder-to-shoulder contact with Wakelam and the conscientiousness of his approach to presenting a historical record, render it the most valuable account of Wakelam's commentary available.[53] What he records is the founding of British live sports radio running commentary.

I cannot remember anything about the game itself beyond the fact that the next two hours were two of the most exciting of my life. Within five minutes all my fears had been swept away. Wakelam seemed like a man inspired. His words came out in a torrent, and the faster he talked, the clearer it was. He never paused except for breath, or when the game paused; and he never corrected himself. It was like magic! Several times I found myself staring at him in amazement and Lapworth did the same.

[53] Compare Sieveking's account with John Arlott's assessment of Wakelam as a narrator: "…a natural talker with a reasonable vocabulary, a good rugby mind and a conscious determination to avoid journalese." Quoted in Christopher Martin-Jenkins, *Ball by Ball, The Story of Cricket Broadcasting* (London: Grafton, 1990), 22.

Wakelam's memories in 1938 corroborate those of Sieveking:

> Straightaway I forgot all my nervousness and stage-fright, all my previously and arduously collected phrases, and all the, as I thought, snappy and pithy expressions which I had anxiously culled from the leading sporting writers of the day. I was so wrapped up in following the flight and fortunes of that ball... that I raced away like a maniac...

At length,

> ...with Lapworth's calm voice occasionally bringing me back to earth, and tempering my Celtic fervour, with Sieveking's commanding hand sometimes waving me back when I crowded on to the mike... I got somehow to half-time and a welcome breathing space.

After half-time, Wakelam continued in the same vein and safely saw the game through to the end. According to most subsequent press reports, he described the play and conveyed the action with skill. Lapworth, the second and very much subordinate narration helpmeet, did not impress many but was not pilloried. Reith, a rugby man, signalled his approval. Reith actually contacted the engineers' van (where he presumably spoke to Cock) twice; at half- and full-time.

> ...the telephone in the van rang. It was the Director General Mr. Reith, to say he was very pleased with our efforts. It was due to his having rung up during the broadcast to

> say he wanted the positions given oftener, that Lapworth and I had gone to town like a pair of cross-talking comedians.[54]

Sieveking's placing of a man from the St. Dunstan's blind institution for ex-military men was praised by Wakelam as a masterstroke. Over the following days and weeks Wakelam was deluged with mail congratulating him on his work. Sieveking claimed that "For the rest of that day people were ringing Savoy Hill from all over Britain to congratulate the BBC on the most exciting broadcast they had ever heard."[55] It has to be stressed that to that point in the Company (now Corporation)'s history, it did not face a lot of competition.

The third man in the "rickety" (Sieveking) custom built commentary hut alongside Sieveking and Wakelam, Charles Lapworth, is worthy of some attention even though he was not a BBC employee. Though the *Western Daily Press* described him inaccurately in their preview as "another old Rugby player" and the *Portsmouth Evening News* thought his role was to "broadcast local colour," the reality was somewhat different.[56] Sieveking stated that he had "engaged [him] as a kind of Number Two and general filler-in-of-pauses-when-necessary..."[57] Wakelam also describes Lapworth's role as a "No. 2…or, as someone immediately and appropriately remarked, my 'Dr. Watson.'" He was also detailed by Sieveking's tight running order to "read out the list of players, referee and possibly linesmen and give the position of the International games...describe the crowd and any incident visible, or the arrival of celebrities." During the match the "No. 2" would help listeners to envision the position of the play by calling out a number between one and eight that matched a drawing of the pitch divided equally into eight parts, actualising an idea of Sieveking's which

[54] L. Sieveking, *Autobiographical Sketches*, 54.
[55] Ibid.
[56] *Western Daily Mail* and *Portsmouth Evening News*, both January 14, 1927.
[57] L. Sieveking, *Autobiographical Sketches*, 53.

was to last until the Second World War. As the latter put it, "...if every listener had some sort of plan of the ground in front of him, together with all the details of the teams involved, and if I continually referred to it, anyone familiar with the game would easily be able to see it in his mind's eye exactly how the game was going."[58] In the event, Lapworth and Sieveking shared the duty.

Lapworth did not fit the staffing template cut out by Reith and Carpendale. One rugby author noted that "Alongside [Wakelam] was Charles Lapworth, whose colourful early career included spells in Hollywood, and as a radical Socialist, editor of the *Daily Herald* in its most uninhibited period, but evidently not much exposure to rugby."[59] Lapworth was a Syndicalist, a strand of socialism fully committed to the overthrow of the capitalist order.[60] Unlike the class backgrounds of Cock and Sieveking and almost certainly the BBC engineers he was the son of a Staffordshire coal miner. His rise to prominence in journalism on both sides of the Atlantic, without the benefits that birth into a socially elite family could bestow, was not a rarity. Journalism and socialist politics were two sources of entry to worldly success in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods, where the typical characteristics of the gentleman were not regarded by the gatekeepers of power in those arenas as essential. By 1927 he had moved into the film industry in the United States where he worked as a journalist and script writer for the Englishman Alfred Hitchcock among others, and may have by then left active politics behind. He had had no BBC career previous to 15 January 1927 and, according to the *Radio Times*, made only one more contribution to British broadcasting: presenting and mediating a debate about the merits of the silver screen relative to the theatre, two weeks after

[58] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 167.
[59] Huw Richards, *The Red and the White – The Story of England v Wales Rugby* (London: Aurum, 2009), 83.
[60] Robert Holton, "'Daily Herald v. Daily Citizen,' 1912-15, The Struggle for a Labour Daily in Relation to 'the Labour Unrest,'" *International Review of Social History*, 19, no. 3 (1974), 347-376.

Twickenham.[61] As noted above, he attended the commentator trials where he was noticed by Wakelam. The invitation to Lapworth to contribute was most likely Sieveking's given the organisational autonomy he was given. A personal friendship may be assumed. Sieveking's connections to artistic communities or perhaps the Suffragette movement's radicalism explains why Lapworth's radicalism should not come as a surprise. However, his politics were anomalous to the BBC. The casual and abruptly truncated nature of his use was suggestive either of a dim view being taken of this by bodies higher in the hierarchy, his return to the USA, or a lack of interest in further radio work on his part.

Lapworth's voice was referenced by Wakelam both in his 1938 memoir and in his 1952 article: "I remember too the cool, calm voice of Lapworth with his occasional question, keeping me reminded that I must not be too technical..."[62] He described Lapworth as "doing a hero's work in all conscience," and the extent of his praise from one who had opposed the Strike the previous May suggests that whatever his political views, Lapworth's habitus were not anomalous in the intensely haut-bourgeois setting of the BBC. Sieveking's only comment on Lapworth's voice was in stopping it: "Promptly at a quarter-to-three the players walked out on to the ground, and I silenced Lapworth, who was still talking about the crowd."[63] The absence of a comment on his accent, as an essential part of dominant class habitus, most strongly suggests his having adapted his mode of speech to a faithful reproduction of received pronunciation. Thus polish and dignity of tone were maintained, neutralising the dissonance of Lapworth's politics.

The case in favour of the broadcast being socially constructed along dominant class lines or principles rests on five arguments: firstly, that Sieveking was a dominant class individual par

[61] BBC *Radio Times* archive, http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/schedules/2lo/1927-01-31.
[62] *Radio Times,* January 11, 1952, 7.
[63] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 170.

excellence; secondly, that the sporting event chosen for the first live broadcast highlighted a quintessential dominant class sport (in Britain, Wales aside), thus carrying with it considerable symbolic freight; thirdly, the choice of ex-Westminster and Oxford ex-Harlequin Teddy Wakelam to narrate the match, which mediated aspects of dominant class habitus to the audience (Reith's "best") and finally, that the entire event, from initial organisation to execution of the narration, was deeply imprinted with gentleman amateur philosophy. Fourthly, in 1927 English rugby union was still one of the prime loci of amateur sport and a repository for the public school amateur ethos in one of its most extreme forms (alongside amateur athletics and amateur rowing) and Twickenham, one of dominant class sport's spiritual homes, staged England internationals which sub-textually were celebrations of dominant class culture and which kept the flames of social superiority and amateurism in sport burning. Since "Rugby's Great Split" over thirty years previously, when the northern culture of broken time payments was outlawed, the sport's administrators had produced a code of rugby football that self-signified as sport in a pristine form, free of the taint of working-class involvement both on and off the field.[64] It was still the case that a player could be banned for life by the governing body, the Rugby Football Union, for merely sharing a pitch with a player who had played the professional game. The friendship between Wakelam and Coopper, secretary of the RFU in 1927, is a reminder of a typical BBC sport and social class nexus of the period. At Twickenham in 1927, the cordiality between them is notable in illustrating the effect of habitus in social reality. They shared backgrounds in education and the armed forces - Coopper's alma mater was the Royal Naval Engineering College - as well as their shared involvement in the sport of "rugger". Fifthly, Teddy Wakelam embodied so many characteristics of the quintessential dominant class male that he was a 'perfect' choice for an organisation almost exclusively colonised by dominant class individuals and driven by

[64] See Tony Collins, *Rugby's Great Split: Class, Culture and the Origins of Rugby League Football* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

a number of dominant class dispositions, attitudes and beliefs, his selection was heavily motivated by considerations of social class. In his own account, Sieveking seems to have selected Wakelam entirely on the basis of the latter solving the former's problem: how to find trialists who could narrate in the form that he required. But there is no evidence of what Sieveking was looking for, only that to his ears it sounded 'right'. It is actually possible that Wakelam was selected simply because he was able to speak fluently about the play from moment to moment. What part the latter's dominant class habitus – clothes, facial hair (he wore a moustache), deportment, manner(s), accent and pronunciation - played in this is impossible to say. However, given the intentional dominance of dominant class individuals on the staff, one of whom was Sieveking, it is likely to have either been important or an added advantage. Add Wakelam's educational and social capital - Marlborough and Cambridge - his sporting capital (he had recently captained the socially elite Harlequins club), his social connections to leading figures in the RFU and the senior officer at the Twickenham ground to the equation and he (Wakelam) stands as a perfectly suitable fit.[65] It is extremely likely that Sieveking knew something of this when he was somewhat frantically telephoning friends and contacts to find trialists. These arguments aggregated form a meta-hypothesis where this event forms an outstanding example of the BBC as an institution constructed and run seamlessly along class lines. The first commentary constituted the construction of a new sub-field (or sub-social universe) within the field of the BBC where the game was played by rules constructed by the dominant class and where one of the chief stakes was the reproduction of dominant class hegemony in British society.

[65] "Arriving at Twickenham, Sieveking and I were met by Commander Cooper [sic], an old and valued friend of mine, and together we examined our perch, which was a somewhat rickety-looking hut mounted on a scaffold platform at the end of the then single-decker West Stand, in the south-west corner." Wakelam, *Half-Time,* 190. "Engineer Commander S. F. Coopper" is the title and name by which he was known in RFU correspondence.

Each argument can be refuted to a greater or lesser extent. Firstly, Sieveking's class background is incidental to his position at the BBC. Given that secondary education in 1920s Britain was granted to a minority of the population it is understandable that Reith should seek dominant class individuals because they automatically conferred status upon the organisation in the eyes of the wireless manufacturers and the government and upon broadcasting output. Britain did not have a history of democratic structures and culture; Reith was merely reflecting this in his BBC practices. Secondly, the selection of a rugby international for the first live sports narration is not significant; it could just as easily have been a soccer match - a cup tie was broadcast seven days later. Given the long-standing nature of the BBC's desire to transmit live outside broadcasts of sporting events it is not surprising that as soon as corporation status was granted at the beginning of 1927 staff wanted to be expeditious in initiating such broadcasts. Looking for an event of some importance, the beginning of the international rugby season provided a perfect opportunity to do this. Thirdly, the selection of Charles Lapworth, a man of industrial working-class origin and sometime radical activist as the "No. 2" strongly negatives the proposition. Fourthly, the selection of Wakelam could have been made purely on the merit of his trial. No other candidate is mentioned by Sieveking as being remotely suitable, including an "eminent journalist." Wakelam, being a dominant class individual, can hardly be expected to talk in any other mode than one consistent with his own class and upbringing. And, had Wakelam been verbally inarticulate and another trialist competent and from a lower class or class fraction, it is possible that the latter would have been given the job. In the context of BBC history to this point, however, it was not likely, especially as the sport in question was suffused with dominant class habitus.

Wakelam's style of commentary and diction from the evidence we have of his trial and press comment can be interpreted as having little or no class relevance at all. *The Times*'

assessment of the broadcast came quite close to agreeing, arguing that "His *staccato* ejaculations like "It's in touch," "He's passed," "He's lost it," "Magnificent kick," "Missed it," "Scrum," and so forth, made the microphones seem a very human instrument."[66] In fact, his lack of self-control at the microphone, so vividly handed down to us by Sieveking, encapsulated by his thinking that Wakelam might "blow up," i.e., physically explode, is anything but an example of gentlemanly suavity and coolness under pressure. There is something rather democratic about his human frailty here, perhaps.

The democratic theme was noted by a newspaper on the following Monday, The *Manchester Chronicle* reporter commented, "I notice that some people say that the description of the match was too popular, and did not detail interesting points from the expert point of view. That, however, to a great extent, was intentional. The idea was to give the ordinary listener a popular description of the progress of the game."[67] *The Times* man agreed, stating that Wakelam "chose the very simplest style of speech, that of an acutely interested spectator; and his frequent use of phrases that everybody watching the game must have been using made his story all the more convincing." Given the huge contingent of working-class Welshmen in the crowd of whom those in the press box could not have been unaware, this comment is noteworthy. Fourthly, the apparent mutual social comfort of Wakelam and Coopper is belied by the fact that the latter was to prove a difficult individual to deal with in later years. The BBC did not have harmonious relations with other dominant class sports such as the Henley Regatta organisers, while relations between BBC staff and non-dominant class sports such as ice hockey and speedway were often cordial.[68] Fifthly, Britain's social structure being what it was, the BBC could hardly be blamed for reflecting the status quo position, the hegemony of

[66] *The Times*, January 17, 1927.
[67] *Manchester Chronicle*, January 17, 1927.
[68] See WAC files: R30/1,305/1 Ice Hockey, 1936-9; R30/3,592/1 Wembley, Speedway, 1936-39 and R30/1,181/1, Henley-on-Thames Regatta.

the dominant class. There was no obvious demand that a highly successful BBC in its first four years should alter the composition of its mediators who were almost exclusively 'educated' class members who alone possessed the expertise required for satisfactory programme building. Sixthly, there is no evidence of Lapworth having any attachment to the dominant class, save his alleged friendship with Sieveking, nor manifesting aspects of habitus applicable to that class. Indeed, his class origins and his work in the meritocratic USA film industry further suggests this detachment. Finally, given the lack of validity in the arguments for a socially constructed BBC dominated unduly by the socially advantaged, the final argument, merely a composite of four existing arguments, falls flat.

This case study exercise illustrates the ambiguous nature of circumstantial evidence, the type which dominates in sources used in this investigation. However, in discussing dominant class power, Bourdieu speaks of its hidden nature and the need of the privileged class to disguise its existence where fields are clearly sites of struggle.[69] To anyone familiar with Bourdieu's work it is clear that he would have made light of the challenge to the argument that the first BBC sports commentary event was anything other than one where dominant class power was abundantly evident. Bourdieu's belief was implacable that in fields such as journalism and broadcasting the socially and politically dominant sought to maintain and reproduce their power.

The Influence of Gentlemanly Amateurism: a Micro-Study

The influence of the gentleman amateur philosophy, whose genesis is owed to Thomas Arnold's reform and reinvention of the public school at Rugby from 1828, was so profound, in a Victorian period which saw sporting practices utterly transformed from folk forms to codified modern forms in significantly increased numbers, that it has attracted much interest

[69] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 14, 97, 98.

among historians of sport.[70] It may be seen as an adapted form of a gentlemanly culture with long roots in continental Europe where notions of the gentleman, the *mondain*, with his effortless elegance, had been concerned with high culture and taste. This peculiarly England gentleman amateur ethos, was an invented tradition of the Victorian age.[71] Scholarly representations of its nineteenth century manifestation abound. Holt has summarised it as being "...many things: a belief in a new kind of vigorous physical culture based on reforming old games and exercises; an organising principle based on voluntary association and the creation of representative national structures; a written and unwritten code of conduct to promote the competitive principle; and an aesthetic of sport itself. It was a complex phenomenon with complex causes."[72]

Bourdieu acknowledges its profundity - "amateurism is one dimension of an aristocratic philosophy of sport as a disinterested practice, a finality without end, analogous to artistic practice..."[73] – and one of the key sources of its transmission and reproduction: "What is acquired in and through the experience of school, a sort of retreat from the world and from real practice, of which the great boarding schools of the élite represent the fullest form, is the propensity toward activity for no purpose, a fundamental aspect of the ethos of the bourgeois 'elites,'..."[74] Complex or not, its essentials formed a code which was efficiently carried by the public schoolboy into adult life, very often via attendance at a Cambridge or Oxford college, frequently into the professions and public service. Entry to the dominant class was thereby achieved. According to Stone, "...it was broadly assumed that any genteel young man, with

[70] See Richard Holt, *Sport and the British* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Chapter Two.
[71] Richard Gruneau, "'Amateurism' as a Sociological Problem: Some Reflections Inspired by Eric Dunning," *Sport in Society*, 9, no. 4 (September 2006), 564.
[72] Richard Holt, "The Amateur Body and the Middle-class Man: Work, Health and Style in Victorian Britain," *Sport in History*, 26, no. 3 (2006), 353.
[73] Pierre Bourdieu, "Sport and Social Class," *Social Science Information*, 17, no. 6 (December 1978), 824.
[74] Bourdieu, ibid., 823-4.

reasonable energy and good character, given a public school education, was qualified to identify as a gentleman and, thus, assume positions of leadership."[75]

The utilitarian function of the public school was most deeply informed by the requirement to produce leaders. In an expanding Empire built on and sustained by military force, the school was crucial in imprinting in the male pupil the dominant class mission. For one historian, these men acted as the "ideological mortar" of the Empire.[76] Accented was the concept of *service* as opposed to *work*, in accordance with notions of the gifts of the gentleman, which proved his superiority over his lower order counterpart, being so effulgent they could and would be displayed without effort. This secured a contiguous link with a philosophy of the "gentleman" that dated back to the early modern period.[77] Victorian gentlemanliness was further sustained by the revival of Hellenism in the mid-century where the supposed superiority of the learned culture of the ancient Greeks could be attached to the social superiority of the English gentleman. Harnessed too was the sporting aspect of classical lifestyle. Olympic revivalism was founded by Baron de Coubertin, inspired by his visits to English public schools, and their proven ability to reproduce successive generations of gentlemen impregnated with a sporting code comprising chivalry, fair play, *esprit de corps*, an acceptance that winning and losing was a part of life, and, *inter alia*, the vital importance of leadership.[78] 'Muscular Christianity' was one succinct phrase which became popular in summing up the games cult of the Victorian and Edwardian public school, though to revert to Holt, gentleman amateurism was complex, a hotch-potch of beliefs, some of which were contradictory - the founding of a modern educational practice that immediately looked backwards and the production of effortless displays of talent built on sweat and, in the most

[75] Duncan Stone, "Deconstructing the Amateur," *Cultural and Social History* , 1, no. 27 (May 2019), 3, https://www.academia.edu/34556804/Deconstructing_the_Gentleman_Amateur_article_version_'.
[76] For the trappings of pomp, ceremony and high luxury that accompanied the Viceroy of India in the 1920s, see David Gilmour, *Curzon: Imperial Statesman* (London: Penguin, 2019) and Mark Bence-Jones, *Viceroys of India* (London: Legend, 1982).
[77] See Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 61-5.
[78] John Hargreaves, *Sport, Power and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1986), 44.

popular winter game, violence, to give two examples. Diverging from Greek thought, the importance of the intellect was deeply negated at the elite institutions. As the Rugby Yearbook of 1856 stated, "We are not students in England. Great Englishmen (generally speaking) are great in some departments of practical life, great statesmanship, jurisprudence or war. Their nature is abhorrent of the study."[79] A German author and teacher who participated in the system could omit the importance of intellect too while remaining a fervent supporter. He believed public school products to be imbued with "honesty and uprightness, simplicity and purity of character, a hearty detestation of all that is mean and low, combined with modesty, manliness and a good physique."[80]

For the British dominant class for whom the function of the concept was to reproduce its power to dominate, gentleman amateurism had the value of being able to endure. In the late-Victorian and Edwardian period, rhetorical flourishes were still common, expressing views such as manners and classical education being superior qualifications for sporting excellence than expert coaching and specialised training, which compromised the essential ingredients of elegance and style.[81] By 1914 advocates of Empire could boast the recent annexations of Egypt and the Sudan. A succession of ex-public schoolboys had colonised the army and the administrative service to accomplish the governmental mission.

By the 1920s, most of the cabinet ministers since 1850 had attended British public schools where the philosophy of gentleman amateurism had been driven into them. This educational philosophy still had strong dominant class support after the Great War among conservative

[79] Rugby Yearbook 1856 quoted in J. Hargreaves, *Sport, Power & Culture*, 40.
[80] *The Times*, January 16, 1903, 4.
[81] Dave Day, "Massaging the Amateur Ethos: British Professional Trainers at the 1912 Olympic Games," *Sport in History*, 32, no. 2 (May 2012), 159, quoting Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, "The Development of Professionalism in the Victorian Army," *Armed Forces and Society*, 1, no. 4 (1975), 48 and Holt, "The Amateur Body," 362-6.

elements.[82] Its supporters were tenacious in their attempt to rescue all aspects of the pre-war governing class culture, some of which were under pressure due to the vast social and psychic rupture delivered by over four years of total warfare. Meanwhile, values such as the devaluation of the intellect against the elevation of the body and the essentiality of games for developing 'character' were still deeply embedded in public school culture.[83]Amateurism also had a reach beyond sport. At the 1924 Annual conference of the British Music Society, music critic Edwin Evans stated that the musical tastes of the amateur were usually ten to twenty years in advance of the professional, and that the genuine love of music was only to be found in that section of the community. For Dr. Cyril Rootman, "The amateur was the person whom one could be quite sure was doing it for the love of it; the professional was always questionable." He also described the tradition of the professional as "fake."[84]

Almost a year beyond the founding first commentary, H. G. Lewis of the *Westminster Gazette*, in a soccer Cup-ties preview article for *Radio Times*, argued that the gentleman amateur team Corinthians, about to meet New Brighton, enjoyed a superior endowment of intrinsic embodied qualities compared to the professional clubs. "Without the advantage of week-by-week matches they nevertheless bring freshness and a devil-may-care spirit to the field. There is no room among them for the stereotyped methods which one watches week by week in League games," he wrote.[85] This said, newspaper sources suggest that such views were not now necessarily common. In fact, more thoughtful and un-prejudiced discussions of amateurism in sport could be found even before the war.[86] After it, as towering a figure in

[82] See Tony Collins, *Social History of Rugby Union* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), Chapter Three (The War Game) for the importance of gentleman amateurism during the Great War among players of rugby union.
[83] Connelly, *Enemies of Promise*, 172.
[84] 'The Amateur in Opera', *The Times*, June 26, 1924.
[85] *Radio Times*, January 6, 1928, 35.
[86] See for example, *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, "On the Links," 29 October, 1912, 7.

cricket as Kent's Lord Harris was compelled to disguise his continued avowal of the amateur tradition under a layer of what one historian has described as disingenuous guff."[87]

In Sieveking's first years at Savoy Hill the gentleman amateur philosophy was still pervasive. Many of the radio pioneers were 'young' in the 1920s but they were children of pre-1914 Britain, a period which was now being depicted as a 'Golden Age'. Divorced from such chimeras, in the real post-war world - "the nitty-gritty of everyday life," as Bourdieu put it - the gentleman of leisure was increasingly required to enter the professions or exploit the natural resources of their landed wealth under pressure of higher taxation. Given that the dominant classes controlled such fields as the law, the civil service, institutions in the City of London and the universities and elite schools, such paradoxes need not matter since members of that class had a monopoly of almost all legitimate sources of mediation, in books, magazines and newspapers and so on, which immediately legitimated their expositions of amateurism and indeed, any subject on which they felt the need or desire to express themselves. They also, as we have seen, controlled the new phenomenon of broadcasting.

The BBC can be interpreted as being founded on two principles: the desire for wireless manufacturers to maximise profit and the imperative, derived by the government's acceptance of the development, that amateur wireless programming already existed and needed to be formalised, codified, or reined in. The baton handed to Reith was either an act of corporate libertarianism or responsible capitalism. Given a free hand to organise national broadcasting, by 1924, as his book, *Broadcasting over Britain* revealed, he was already shaping the Company along public service lines, an ethos already in the thinking of Marconi's representative at the meeting of May 1922.

[87] Derek Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket* (London: Aurum, 1999), 185.

But the social universe in which the organisation was placed and thereafter moved was the field of British institutions. It is hard to separate this from the parallel field of British politics. In one dimension of this, the stakes for the players in this field concerned power, where different political parties competed for parliamentary seats in the attempt to form a government. In another, the stakes were somewhat covert - influencing public opinion - the players being the separate organs of the mass media. In this field, there is no question that a part of Reith's mission was ideological: to uphold values which may be described as 'traditional' in the context of what were (and remain) known as 'British traditional values'. Principal among these were the notion of the monarchy as a sacrosanct institution, the vital importance of the British Empire, the exalted status of Britain's military services and their most distinguished personnel and the high prestige of the aristocracy. Also important was the not exclusively British idea of 'high', legitimate culture in the form of music and literature deserving its place at the apex of a cultural pyramid. A binding principle resting above, below and around these values, was the upholding and rigidly stabilising of a British class system where a dominant class consisting of aristocracy, country gentry, plutocracy, commercial and artistic haute bourgeoisie, public school educated professionals, military personnel and the clergy remained able to dominate the classes below them. That BBC practices acted to do this are visible in a huge proportion of is output and this power was activated too in weekly articles in its flagship publication, *Radio Times*. A strand of dominant class philosophical thought which possessed much ideological force in maintaining dominant class power was gentlemanly amateurism. It was intensely and inextricably bound up with national sporting practices and the first live sports broadcast with running commentary was an event which, conceivably, created an opportunity for the dominant class-oriented BBC to carry out its social mission.

The argument in favour of the hypothesis that the broadcast of the England v. Wales rugby international in January 1927 represents an exercise in the diffusion of gentleman amateur ideology rests on a trio of dominant class individuals, Reith, Sieveking and Wakelam, acting as hosts and transmitters of its ideals and principles, having inherited social and cultural capital and having been the receivers via their primary socialisation and their education of the full range of dominant class dispositions. As adults, their associational lives - in their gentlemen's clubs, sports clubs, their military service, friendship groups and so on – and their working lives saw their absorption and re-transmission of these values. The broadcasting event here under scrutiny saw the activation and realisation of these values, one of which was gentleman amateurism.

This behavioural manifestation was visible at several stages in the process of producing this broadcasting product on that Saturday afternoon. Sieveking's decision-making - selecting Wakelam at the trial, his deployment of a blind man from St. Dunstan's as a singular audience for the narrator, the provision of a supporting comment-maker for Wakelam and finally, his invention of a pitch map scheme for domestic listeners - is clear evidence of one element of supposed gentleman amateur superiority. This was the effortless, almost casual ability to be able to spontaneously produce ideas and solutions to problems. Sieveking clearly displayed a prized quality Reith had singled out in 1924: "imagination."[88] This is close also to the quality of 'style', highly prized in gentleman amateur theory. Sieveking's amateur mentality was revealed in his own account of events where he described his role as in-house roving problem solver with a tone of bemusement. Indeed, he appears mystified as to his position at the BBC, believing himself wholly unqualified for his nominal role as an assistant to the Head of Education. Structurally, the BBC itself was organised along gentleman

[88] "The divine gift of imagination is an essential characteristic of the broadcaster. Imagination will make all his programmes go with a swing; the lack of it will cause some of his best efforts to fall flat." John Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), 43.

amateur principles. Sieveking received absolutely no training for his position; he was simply expected, by virtue either of his innate intelligence or his inherited and later gathered social, cultural and educational capital to be able to succeed.

The most concrete argument for the influence of the gentleman amateur ethos is a vivid portrait of Sieveking given by colleague Lionel Fielden in his memoir:

> ...a flamboyant figure he was, thundering on the telephone, gesticulating wildly with huge hands that knocked over everything within reach, always pioneering, starting endless experiments, some brilliant, some incredible; *the irresistible amateur* in a field in which there were no experts.[89]

Given Fielden's personal knowledge of both Sieveking and the 1920s zeitgeist, his conceptualisation of Sieveking as an 'amateur' cannot be dismissed lightly.

Furthermore, the argument is also supported by historians Jeff Hill and Asa Briggs. In the judgement of the former, the BBC staff maintained "a keen amateur ethic" in their sports output.[90] The latter has made two important observations on this subject, firstly that "The talented 'amateur' was at least as sure of a place in the BBC during the inter-war years as he was in the Civil Service" and that BBC staff "…thought of themselves not as 'professionals' but as people living a full, interesting and varied life."[91] Sieveking's artistic disposition fits this description well and plays into the traditional view of the artist as one beyond negative connotations of capitalism where 'professionalism' is interpreted as a person in pursuit of profit.

[89] Lionel Fielden, *The Natural Bent* (London: Deutsch, 1960), 25. This author's italics.
[90] Jeff Hill, *Sport in History - an introduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 98.
[91] Briggs, *Golden Age of Wireless*, 423, 424.

A case against the depiction of the broadcast as an exercise in gentlemanly amateurism is not difficult to build. Firstly, Fielden's description may be dismissed as it is unlikely that he is using the concept of gentleman amateurism; rather he is acknowledging the absence of formal training in broadcasting, almost inevitable in a new industry. In addition, a single assessment is worth little without corroboration. Secondly, the BBC was palpably a professional organisation in early 1927, run along professional lines. Reith came from a business background and ran the BBCo successfully along business lines, as proven by the financial success of *Radio Times*, an organ run firmly on business principles, clearly evident not least in the large amount of advertising revenue it secured each week. This meant that Sieveking, de facto, was employed in a professional capacity, carrying out a number of tasks on a salaried basis. Therefore, any organisational failings of which he may have been guilty were completely unrelated to his socialisation, his class attachment and so on. He may have been guilty of amateurishness or a lack of competence; or he may have been the victim of the ineptitude of his superiors who disregarded the absence of planning in the rush to complete a founding live sports broadcast before its staff were competent to carry it out, but no ideological or socially constructed explanations are sustainable.

The argument is also weakened by the incompetence with which much of the project was managed, something very distant from a display of the effortlessly executed gifts of the superior classes. The broadcast and its pre-date preparation were seriously deficient in terms of planning and organisation. The operation - the engineering aspect aside which appears to have been carried out very successfully - is noteworthy for its instinctive, as opposed to technical, approach. In fact, at times it was disorganised, bordering on shambolic; less gentlemanly amateur than amateurish. Flaws can be found at every turn: the sudden decision to put on the commentary with no means of publicising it in *Radio Times* with its six-week

lead-in that could not or would not be altered; the failure to alert the daily newspapers in sufficient time to be listed there; Sieveking's hit and hope ringing around any and every possible narrator candidate – gentlemen who knew rugby – with little time to spare; the rush to find a commentator where gimcrack trials were organised within days of the match taking place, and where there was a complete failure on the first day of trials; the finding of only three trialists on the second trial day; the sudden decision making of the pitch map and numbers 1-8 calling; the building of a hut with a poor view of the match, being positioned in a corner of the ground; the chronic lack of preparedness of Wakelam, wracked with nerves having had only a single short test where he had no idea of its quality and finally, Sieveking and Lapworth's complete ignorance of the game they were helping to mediate to the national audience.[92] We have Wakelam to thank for this egregious Lapworth error during a pause in play: 'Do they always play with an oval ball?' a remark which may to any Rugger player appear ludicrous..."

This lack of elementary knowledge was completely dissonant with Reith's conception of the aims of the BBC. This was compounded by a slightly less grievous error: "...after one of the Englishmen had been hurt, and had had to leave the field, [Lapworth remarked] "Who will they send on instead?" another apparent bloomer..." Indeed it was, the use of substitute players not being allowed in the sport, a rule that was not to change for over half a century. The responsibility for this ignorance is both Lapworth and Sieveking's too. The lack of oversight of Sieveking's work should be noted at this point also. Executive involvement in the process was minimal. One also wonders why no preparatory visits to foreign countries by BBC personnel where live broadcasting had already been developed were organised, to learn

[92] Oddly and ironically, the *Radio Times* edition which comprised that Saturday's programmes listing ran a front cover devoted to American football.

how the Corporation might execute their own.[93] Sieveking's later admission of being bereft of rugby knowledge - "...I, quite unfamiliar with Rugger, was unable to follow the rapid rushing of the game hither and thither" - displays neither the casual giftedness of the amateur gentleman nor the basic competence of a workaday professional.[94] Not to have acquainted himself with the rudiments of the game was negligent. Lapworth is almost equally culpable. Wakelam's "human instrument" can also be read as a man floundering in search of a method. We know from Sieveking's account of the trial that the former did not initially know how to produce a commentary until he suddenly burst forth. These effusions were enough to impress Sieveking but any further endorsement is merely subjective. Again what is notable is the lack of preparedness on the part of the BBC: Wakelam was contacted the day before his first trial date. The same was true of first soccer narrator George Allison a week later.

An alternative reading of the BBC in this period is one where because of the social class of the staff at this point in time, a point where the habitus of the ex-public schoolboy met the singular post-war period, the character of the organisation was one of barely controlled amateurism of a distinctly non-Victorian gentlemanly kind. A comment from Eric Maschwitz, the friend Sieveking brought into the Company, speaks of the casual nature of the BBC's working culture in the mid-late 1920s:

> I can recall little of my few months with Outside Broadcasting, except that I spent many uproarious occasions with Gerald Cock, at theatres, football matches and the like. My sole responsibility appears in memory to have been that of attending innumerable church services, and tipping the verger after the broadcast.[95]

[93] This is evident not least by the first *Radio Times* of 1927 including a cover article by journalist Hamilton Fyfe on the American football code, an oddity, to say the least.
[94] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 77.
[95] Eric Maschwitz, *No Chip On My Shoulder* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1957), 51.

This speaks more loudly of the leisure culture of the young English gentleman at play than of a serious, professional organisation. And it does not speak at all of the elegance, ease and style supposedly characteristic of the gentleman amateur ethos. If Gorham's pungent testimony amounts to fair comment, the Great War seems to have caused the world to have moved on. In Chapter One we saw him describing the effects of shell-shock on some of his colleagues. Of the wider cohort of individuals he observed,

> Tremendous confusion of values reigned. Sabbatarianism was more important than religion; respectability was more important than morality, prestige more important than efficiency. Everybody was trying to impress everybody else..."[96]

Against this evidence, Sieveking's talk of "fun and miracles", of "creating things out of the air" appears idealised, though no less 'real' a contribution to the pool of memoir evidence of the period. It is suggestive of the creative-artistic ethos he had followed since childhood, which he pursued even as a prisoner of war in 1917-18 and which he pursued perennially until his later years.[97] Evidence from both sources cause great difficulty for the existence of gentleman amateurism post-war in two ways. Firstly, the devastating effects on all classes in Britain caused by their involvement in the conflict seem evidently to have given birth to a new psychological state of this contingent of dominant class members, causing patterns of behaviour which contradict the codes of gentlemanly behaviour laid down in a plethora of books, articles, speeches, school addresses to pupils, fragments of schoolboy (and girl) lessons and master-to-pupil conversations. Secondly and alternatively, the behaviour Gorham highlights plays into charges of hypocrisy which have been laid at the gentlemen amateur

[96] Maurice Gorham, *Sound and Fury*, *Twenty-One Years at the BBC* (London: Percival Marshall, 1948), 20.
[97] In captivity he wrote poetry and other literary products.

sportsmen and sport: taking cash payments for playing; claiming expenses; cheating and sharp practices during games and the use of violent play.[98] Collins has counter-pointed the positive features of the ethos, including Elias's "civilising process" thesis, with the assertion that the dominant class male was trained by their public schools and universities to govern and defend an empire, a duty which required them to act with lethal violence against their subjects as and when necessary."[99] Between 1886 and 1895 thirteen deaths occurred through on-field violence in the sport of rugby union, an average of one and a half deaths per season.[100] Such behaviour suggests that in certain quarters at least, the notion of gentleman amateurism as a reflection of social reality was false, that the concept itself was a fiction or noble ideal not capable of being lived out in reality. Gentleman amateurism's attempt to fuse the opposing philosophies of elegance, manners and style on the one hand with the requirement of sporting violence to build character and keep indigenous populations at bay on the other were irreconcilable. But dominant class power was sufficient for this not to matter in material terms. What did matter was its utilitarian function alongside the enduring power of a dominant class under pressure from rising social classes below it. This social ethos was a device deployed to exclude the working class from sports (rugby union) and from sporting competition (rowing, athletics, the Olympic games) so that the increasingly adept performances of supposedly inferior specimens of humanity bodily, behaviourally, morally and spiritually may be negated and so that the important socialising aspect of sporting practice, as well as the actual playing, could be enjoyed free of proletarian contact.[101]

[98] Holt, *Sport and the British*, 86, 97.
[99] Tony. Collins, book review, "History, Theory and 'the Civilizing Process," *Sport in History*, 25, no. 2 (2005), 303.
[100] Tony Collins, *Rugby's great Split: Class, Culture and the Origins of Rugby League Football*, (London: Cass, 1998), 123-9.
[101] Holt, *Sport & the British*, 116-7; Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures, England 1918-51* (Oxford: University Press, 1998), 107-9, 357-8, 381-2.

The gentleman amateur argument with regard to Sieveking is sustainable only via a false categorisation. Rather than Sieveking's work being the product of his school training, it was an instinctive display of decision making that conforms neither to gentlemanliness nor professionalism. His work was emphatically not sober and technical; neither was it a display of casual style. If it is allowed that Sieveking had no control over being tasked with producing a sports narration with insufficient warning, then his work had to rely on the nexus of his training as a broadcast producer and his innate intelligence. The speed at which Sieveking was able to enable the invention of a commentary style and execute Wakelam's performance too was testament to this nexus and his enthusiasm for the task rather than the social nature of his construction. Highly influential too was his essentially artistic disposition. Wakelam's fervid fluency in unselfconsciously mediating the play to the public might be said to have displayed similarly positive traits: he was enthusiastic; knowledgeable and fully committed to continued invention of a brand new mode of talking about sport, in the moment, requiring a spontaneity which should be credited. Finally, the testimony of Fielden may be dismissed. He alone has described Sieveking in these terms, and though single pieces of judgement may have validity, in this case Fielden merely makes an unsupported and illogical assertion. Fielden, in trying to sum up Sieveking, confuses "amateur" with "experimenter". There may have been no "experts" at the BBC by 1926 but this was only down to the newness of the form.

It is perhaps possible to construct a plausible interpretation of Sieveking's construction of the 15 January 1927 broadcast free of social theory. His work in this early roving organiser role displayed a range of skills and attributes. These consisted of a series of decisions and judgements based on intellect, judgment and taste. The use of rational thinking is best evidenced by two decisions: to organise a trial of potential commentators or 'narrators,' the

term in greater usage at the time, and then in his selection of Teddy Wakelam, a bourgeois and not a BBC staffer, to commentate on the match on the basis of his apparent skill in narrating a schoolboy game in the Deer Park, Richmond. The decision may also be said to be a judgement based on taste and an approval of Wakelam's RP accent which met established Reithian requirements. It was also logical thinking to select an ex-rugby union player of some repute and one known to the Twickenham authorities and the RFU. It was also an entirely rational act to organise the erection of a purpose-built raised hut enabling the mediators to see the game and to organise a second narrator to assist Wakelam. Two more decisions - to engage a blind man to be the recipient of Wakelam's commentary and to devise the system of boxes or squares on a pitch map to be made available to domestic consumers of the match - may be said to involve an attribute that might be described either as "flair," "invention," "inspiration" or "imagination," that quality prized by Reith. One psychologist agrees with the latter individual: "...imagination, as the basis of all creative activity, is an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific, and technical creation alike."[102] Though neurological science would be fruitful territory for further examination of the problem of the meaning of Sieveking's work on the Twickenham project, it might usefully be said here that the dynamics of judgement, which tend to divergence among different individuals for social, psychological and, probably physiological reasons, may on the one hand be said to be fresh, artistic, creative and inspired and on the other, unorganised, slapdash, confused and lucky. To utilise a phrase from the vernacular, he was 'flying by the seat of his pants'. The organisation that itself was slipshod and unsystematic, where demarcation lines of labour were blurred, channelled him into working in that fashion. Sieveking's own account of his work reveals an individual brimming with self-confidence. This is largely due to the pleasure he took from working at the BBC at this time. He

[102] Levs Vygotsky, "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood," *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 4, no. 21 (January-February 2004), 9.

described 1926 as "the most exciting year of my life...1927 and 1928 were almost as exhilarating."[103] At the BBC he felt "a round peg in a round hole."[104] But there is almost certainly more to his self-belief than job satisfaction. The tone of his personal account of his life to this point resonates with pleasure. This may have reflected the writer at the time of its writing, the 1970s, but even in recounting times of doubt and extreme difficulty – war time life expectancy for pilots over the Western Front was three weeks, according to Cecil Lewis, imprisonment during wartime, leaving Cambridge prematurely and moving from occupation to occupation thereafter, unsure of his place in the world – there is a surprising absence of dark tones in the writing.[105] The function of innate qualities of 'character' might perhaps be acknowledged at this point, however scientifically unstable the proposition.

If the modality of analysis is switched to one using the ideological language of the amateur, the term "instinctive genius" might be deployed, particularly in terms of the blind man gambit, the map of squares and the immediate recognition of Wakelam's stream of consciousness description of play as being the one required. Conversely, a more scientific approach while refusing the term 'genius' as being so vague as to be meaningless,[106] would argue that Sieveking's decision-making consisted of a series of rational calculations in creating the optimum conditions for a successful narration. These, it might be argued, signified formidable cognitive function which is often described as 'creative' by cultural critics and commentators. In Bourdieu's social theory, personal attributes described as 'imagination', 'genius', 'miracles', 'gifted' and even 'creativity' are socially constructed. Such qualitative valuations are products of a society in a time that chose to romanticise the role of the artist, particularly the literary type, attributing to the artist intrinsic endowments of

[103] P. Sieveking, *Airborne*, 156.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Cecil Lewis, *Sagittarius Rising* (London: Warner, 1993 edn, first published 1936), 154.
[106] Derek Robins, *Bourdieu and Culture* (London: Sage, 2000), 78.

'nature' or 'God' beyond the possession of the ordinary mortal. It is perhaps more useful to suggest that in the face of novel problems Sieveking produced a number of novel solutions which demonstrably worked in view of their acceptance at the BBC in 1927 and the longevity of their practice in wider broadcasting.[107] But this can be taken further. Bourdieu argued that the sociology of the sociologist had to be taken into account for the reality of everyday life to be adequately understood. In a society which has long advocated the idea that a "superior" education can be had at the "great" public schools and at the Oxbridge colleges as well as the superior personal condition of the 'artist', the researcher should acknowledge the potential of such ideology to distort judgement. There is no evidence that the cognitive powers which produced Sieveking's solutions, his selection of Wakelam for his continuous descriptive flow of language, his pitch map and his use of the St. Dunstan's man were 'obvious', ordinary solutions which could have been produced by an individual from a subordinate social class.

The difficulty of sustaining an analysis without social class resides in the powerful explanatory logic of social theory. Sieveking's calm, almost serene disposition may be in part accounted for by his socialisation and the ease with which dominant class agents play the game in a field, understand its rules and can readily realise the profits it offers.[108] For Bourdieu,

> Total, early, imperceptible learning...confers with self- certainty which accompanies the certainty of possessing cultural legitimacy, and the ease which is the touchstone of excellence; it produces the paradoxical relationship to culture made up of self-

[107] See Lois Isenman, "Understanding Unconscious Intelligence and Intuition, 'Blink' and Beyond," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine,* 56, no.1 (June 2013), 148–66.
[108] Bourdieu, *Sport and Social Class*, 821.

> confidence amid (relative) ignorance and of casualness amid familiarity, which bourgeois families hand down to their offspring as it were an heirloom.[109]

The heirloom that the young Lancelot was handed was a largely artistic one, and it is tempting to read his account of the Twickenham event as an expression of this, especially when one adduces his description of this period alluding to "fun and miracles." His comment, despite being ignorant of sport, that the experiment in live narration was one of his most exhilarating life experiences, can be profitably read as a theatrical "first night" which plays entirely into his literary persona. He arrived at the BBC, as we have seen, via a plethora of young adult endeavours: war time pilot (shot down, imprisoned); poet; Cambridge undergraduate; magazine owner and editor; civil servant; *Daily Express* journalist (for a few weeks); novelist. Sieveking's biography reads as one of Maschwitz's post-war privileged class misfits trying to negotiate an uncertain future in a damaged society trying to re-construct itself after deep psychic trauma. Staff memoirs from the twenties era reveal strong trace elements of old public school boys and 'Varsity gadflies and more sober individuals deeply inscribed by formative influences cut adrift from family life. However, Sieveking's feeling of comfort at the BBC may well also have been a function of habitus in this particular field. Though Fielden's testimony portrays Sieveking as slightly eccentric, in most respects the individual characteristics of his personal habitus meant he was, to use a term of Bourdieu's, "a fish swimming in water."[110]

It is only possible to divorce the social class dimension from Sieveking's work if it is pared down to his personal individual characteristics; to argue that these alone were responsible for his product. This is only possible if one negates the idea of the social dimension having a

[109] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 59.
[110] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 108.

causative relationship to human action. It is entirely possible that the most socially advantaged individuals are more likely to exist in the material conditions that are most likely to aid and abet the production of ideas, invention and imagination. And in the specific case of this event, it cannot be re-imagined without the social meanings inscribed in the selection of the ex-public school and Oxford University man Wakelam to narrate the match, and in the class-bound sound of his voice with all its inflections, tones, timbres and the vocabulary with which it transmitted the actions of the play and the movement of the ball within the game.[111]

Conclusion

Though this analysis cannot produce a completely authoritative answer to the questions posed above, particularly in the absence of direct reference to the concept by Sieveking himself, there is strong evidence to support the hypothesis of Sieveking's managing of the first commentary project in the manner of the gentleman amateur. His actions cannot be described as a directly emanating from the philosophy, the evidence being too circumstantial. However, is extremely difficult to believe that gentleman amateurism, with its belief in effortless production of the stroke or the kick, or artistically, in the creative act of making a painting or a story, or a poem, in flair, imagination, 'dash', beauty, success with ease, did not play a significant role in Sieveking's construction of the commentary event. In the opinion of a later BBC commentator and participant observer, "In 1924 the educated Englishman still spoke as if he owned the earth. In Oxford he behaved as if no one disputed it."[112] Sieveking and his colleagues – we may presume Cambridge products to have felt broadly similar reflexive sentiments – carried themselves with the imprint of their privileged habitus upon them. The concept of gentleman amateurism requires adducing to the discussion at this point: the fact that British inter-war dominant class habitus still factually includes the philosophy cannot be forgotten or dismissed. Yet the BBC was simultaneously an endeavour of the industrial

[111] Robins, *Bourdieu and Culture*, 78.
[112] Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, *Trust To Talk* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 74.

bourgeoisie; creating a national broadcasting system was no game. It depended for its success entirely upon the ethic of professionalism where the deliverance of an efficient outcome of programme delivery was an absolute imperative. BBC culture was moulded within the atmospherics of this paradox and indeed, by them.

Extensive reading of Bourdieu's social theory of class and the reproduction of class inequality, his minute forensic deconstruction of social systems of domination via his theories of the field, capital and habitus provoke a particular understanding of the BBC's hierarchical structures and its practices. The same familiarity with his work suggests that the circumstantial nature of the evidence would not have deterred him from seeing Sieveking's role and work in 1927 as the exercise of dominant class power. Sieveking's inheritance of cultural and social capital and his primary, secondary and tertiary socialisation, a life lived entirely within dominant class circles, associatively concerned with dominant class social habits and customs, leave his class status in absolutely no doubt. So deep was the place of this ideology in public school education, and so profound and widespread was the influence of public school products in British institutions, only a deliberate act of class rebellion could have prevented class thoroughly influencing or fully accounting for the decision making and actions which produced the first commentary culture. His selection of Wakelam as narrator is the most forceful piece of evidence supporting this. The latter's public school-'Varsity education and his connections to elite social class rugby union render him appearing as an identikit figure of Reithian ideology. Only his choice of Charles Lapworth as the "No. 2," provides pause for consideration. More research into their connection is required. This aside, the BBC constructed as a dominant class object with a dominant class chief executive officer and dominant class staff could hardly help producing dominant class suffused events. The first commentary is in harmony with other forms of output in these early-mid BBC years of

the inter-war period. For example, the first successful comedy mediator of working-class contemporary characters was a middle-class individual, Mabel Constanduros.[113] The overwhelming majority of its overall content -its music, drama and talks for example - was by express demand of Reith a direct reflection of dominant class habitus. Thus, Sieveking did not create commentary "out of the air"; he created it within the tight restrictions of an organisation constructed according to an elitist blueprint. In the case of the dominant class programme builders it may well have been the gentleman amateur belief in their own superiority over other classes which dared them to act. If it was not a triumph of gentleman amateurism it may be worth considering as a triumph of elite self-confidence, the same quality which created BBC broadcasting per se in the twenties.

This case study exercise brings a new dimension to scholarly work on the early BBC and sport through a slightly different analytical process. It has brought a new dimension also to this research project's investigation into Reithianism and the inter-war sports mediators. It has enabled the construction of a sports mediator and the processes which produced him (in this case) as more easily examinable historical objects. The Sieveking and Wakelam first-hand accounts utilised here function effectively. This has enabled the first live running commentary project to be illuminated more brightly for inspection. The result is firm confirmation of the Reithian ideology explicated in Chapters One and Two. His belief in his mission to provide cultural "uplift" and its extension into staffing, where only people of "social, educational and business standing" should be taken on, are clearly visible. "Our people," as Reith put it, may be extended to mediators also, where Wakelam had impeccable capital supply for working in the BBC."[114] Reithianism would have been clearly audible too, given Wakelam and Sieveking's dominant class accents, and undoubtedly Lapworth's also.

[113] Jennifer Purcell, *Mother of the BBC, Mabel Constanduros Development of Popular Entertainment on the BBC, 1925-57* (London: Bloomsbury Academic and Professional, 2020), Chapter One.
[114] Reith to Station Directors, June 24, 1924, in Briggs, *Birth of Broadcasting*, 210.

The interpretations and arguments presented here are of course contestable, and it should be remembered that this experiment represents a snapshot of the first days of the new British Broadcasting Corporation, two weeks into 1927. However, as an academic exercise, the case study method has been effective in making possible productive dialectical debate on a subject that deserves more attention: the BBC as a socially constructed dominant class object.

Chapter Four: BBC Sports Mediators and Social Class 1930-39

> "...there is an exception to every rule, and whilst Stewart MacPherson probably gained as much popularity or at least admiration on the air as any, I will not even ask his forgiveness before writing that he could hardly be described as a loveable type. No, in Stew MacPherson it was his quickness, his slickness, and his lack of inhibition that appealed to the public, I am sure. Think of, say, Howard Marshall doing a boxing match, and in those deep tones of his using a MacPherson phrase, such as, 'Gee, that one came downhill with the wind behind it.' No, it just wouldn't do. It wouldn't fit into the Marshall plan! It wouldn't fit into the Marshall make-up!"[1] G. Wynne-Jones

> "When the dominant manage to crush and annul the resistance and the reactions of the dominated, when all movements go exclusively from the top down, the effects of domination are such that the struggle and the dialectic that are constitutive of the field cease. There is history only as long as people revolt, resist, act."[2] P. Bourdieu

Overview

The BBC of the 1930s has been characterised by scholars as intensely bureaucratic and conservative.[3] It was a period when a number of popular press organs constantly criticised its senior staff and its output as being out of touch with a mass audience which wanted radio entertainment and not, as they posited it, a stream of dull lectures from stuffy academics.[4] For Curran and Seaton this was a decade "which was dominated by state openings, royal anniversaries, visits, deaths and births, and by the Coronation."[5] However, there was much more to the BBC decade than this. It was one of an increasing amount of popular programming which saw the creation of new radio 'stars' as the number of wireless license purchasers reached nine million. It was also a decade in which the Corporation undertook

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[1] G. V. Wynne-Jones, *Sports Commentary* (London: no publisher given, 1951), 26.
[2] Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Polity, 1992), 102.
[3] Dan LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy, Mass Communication and the Cultured Mind Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). 274-286; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 142, 153.
[4] Siân Nicholas, "Media History or Media Histories? *Re-addressing the history of the mass media in inter-war Britain*," *Media History*, 18, no. 3-4 (October 2012), 384-7.
[5] James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility – the press and broadcasting in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1981), 145.

audience research for the first time, in 1936.[6] Reith continued in post until June 1938, when, restless and personally dissatisfied, he accepted the offer to become head of another public corporation, Imperial Airways.[7] But before he left he oversaw the opening of a Regional Scheme which all but ended the work of local relay stations. The new national system consisted of the availability of a single national station seen as the deliverer of blue riband programming – in the view of the metropolitan programme builders – to which all Britons should have access, and a second regional station broadcasting alternative output simultaneously.[8] The start of an Empire service in 1932 and preparations for the inauguration of a television service increased the demand for staff, as did several alterations in departmental structure, such as more sophisticated news gathering, a constant intrinsic demand for higher professional standards, large developments in staff training schemes, greater attention to public relations and probing audiences for their views of the service they were being offered.

All this affected sports production very little, in the short term, at least. Beside the changes and developments above described – which do not cover all progressions and expansions – sports output seems to have been neglected. When the decade opened the extent of sports output had been falling since 1928 after five consecutive years of expansion. The contraction can largely be explained by the banning of live soccer from league and cup games (with the exception of The Arsenal, doubtless because of George Allison being a club director). Perhaps more importantly, the decision not to make up the loss with studio-recorded eye-witness accounts and the loss of local stations, many of which had enthusiastically embraced

[6] Robert Silvey, *Who's Listening? The Story of BBC Audience Research* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974); Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society, 1918-39* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983), see Chapter Five.
[7] Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume II, The Golden Age of Wireless* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), see Chapter Six for an account of Reith's departure.
[8] A major reason for the introduction of the Regional Scheme was the fact that across a reduced number of stations it would now be possible to transmit simultaneously two programmes of equal strength for listeners. The building of new transmitters would also enable this improvement to be made. See *Radio Times*, 31 August, 1928, front cover story, "Reorganising the Relay Stations" by Capt. P. P. Eckersley.

the opportunity to make live commentaries. Sports output as a whole did not begin to expand again until 1932. From a total of 927 items in 1927, aggregate sports output across all stations (not including bulletins and 'sport in news') fell to 360 and 313 in 1930 and 1931 respectively. It then rose year on year until 1939 whence it fell again. Output rose 73% between 1932 and 1934, 102% between 1934 and 1936 and 98% between 1936 and 1938. Between 1932 and 1938, output's inter-war zenith, aggregate sports output (to reiterate, not including bulletins and 'sport in news') increased by 594%.[9] This explosion in sports output extent increased the demand for mediators. Consequently, a number of important questions stand out: did the period 1930 -1939 see a change in the class composition of the sports mediator cohort selected to commentate, report, lecture, inform, amuse and entertain the national and regional audiences? If change did occur, what was its extent and why did this take place? The rest of the chapter hopes to answer them.

1930-1935: Mediators and Staffers – Commentators

In terms of commentators at the National station, the dominant class voices of the later 1920s remained in position during the early years of the 1930s. Indeed, the imperative of dominant class membership was consolidated. In the year 1930 Teddy Wakelam took all major rugby fixtures, George Allison all those in soccer, Col. Brand and Teddy Wakelam presided over the Wimbledon championships, Harold Abrahams was given sole care of athletics fixtures, Lyle mediated all major races – of which there were few - and Bernard Darwin commanded coverage of what little golf was put on air. Boxing's audience was also poorly served where Howard Marshall gave ten-minute reports of two fights. Cricket posed some problems as Head of OB Gerald Cock and his chief assistant John Snagge sought a suitable voice for eye-witness accounts. Mediating the first Ashes test was Maurice Foster; Archie MacLaren reported on two others and Aubrey Faulkner on two also. Eight of the above named were

[9] Data derived through the author's own research.

educated at public school and attended Oxford or Cambridge colleges, Allison and Faulkner were not. The latter, however, has little in common with the former. Aubrey Faulkner was South African with an exceptional playing record for that country as an all-rounder before the Great War. Furthermore, he attended the Wynberg High School for Boys, an equivalent institution to an English public school, founded in 1841, and served in the British army in the Boer and First World Wars, ending as a DSO-decorated major. Founder of the first known cricket school, in Richmond, he was a "great coach" and though "those who used his school were often London's elite" he struggled financially.[10] His first BBC broadcast was a Test Match. Three weeks and a day after his last broadcast, the final test of the summer at The Oval, he committed suicide in the bat-drying room of his school.

The other two new cricket broadcasters of that year were not to last either. Maclaren was not invited again, and neither was Foster who went back to his regular sports broadcasts for Midland which continued through to August 1935. MacLaren, despite his brilliance as a batsman and high status as an ex-Test captain, was described in his 1945 Wisden obituary as a "pompous amateur" and lacking "the buoyant optimistic temperament so necessary for complete success in cricket..."[11] The use of multiple speakers for tests was anomalous: both Cock and his successor de Lotbinière liked to work with one mediator per Test series. This did not last: the following year Howard Marshall reported on all five New Zealand tests. He quickly became established as the first choice for National cricket broadcasts and remained so until the War. Though Marshall was not universally admired inside the BBC, he was popular enough with the public and the press to remain in post. The extent of National station commentator continuity was considerable. Snagge, who took his first Boat Race commentary

[10] Jarrod Kimber, "Dazzling Light, Murky Shadow," article on Faulkner published in *Wisden Cricket Monthly* (February 2016), http://www.thecricketmonthly.com/story/963517/dazzling-light--murky-shadow.
[11] *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack* 1945, Archie C. MacLaren obituary via *ESPN cricinfo*, accessed September 4, 2018, http://www.espncricinfo.com/england/content/player/16871.html.

in 1931, continued until 1939 but for one year when Brigadier Gibbon, an ex-Oxford oarsman, took over the role, but was considered to have been unsuccessful. Darwin was number one in golf in the same year, Wakelam in lawn tennis to 1938 and in rugby union to the end of the 1938-39 season, Allison through to 1936 in soccer, Lyle in racing until 1938, Brand in lawn tennis to 1938. It was only in the last two years of peace that these careers were interrupted. Though new men came through to replace them class continuity was absolute. Two commentary and eye-witness reporters were very prominent in 1938 and 1939: Freddie Grisewood and Thomas Woodroofe. Grisewood took over Brand's role at Wimbledon while Woodroofe spread his abilities across soccer, racing, boxing, shooting, equestrian sport and racquets.

Grisewood's career was exceptional in its breadth. Educated at Radley and Magdalen, Oxford, he was employed as announcer in 1929 after contacting Roger Eckersley - "who had long been a friend of mine"[12] - but he had already made occasional appearances on air as a baritone singer from 1926 on 2LO and 5XX Daventry. His became a regular voice on *Children's Hour* in the early-thirties where the talent to both sing and act was required. From 1931 he originated and developed a Cotswolds countryman character, christened "Our Bill," based on his family's gardener, which was first used to fill a *Children's Hour* gap. "Bill" became a famous figure heard up to six times per annum through to the war years and he was a "perfect" compère of the regular *Scrapbook* feature programmes from 1934. His debut in sport was at the England-Germany roller-skate hockey international from Herne Bay in May 1937. He was a commentator on the Coronation in the same year. He is also notable for piloting the Wimbledon and Davis Cup radio transmissions from 1937 to 1939. Indeed, with the social outsider Allison being displaced by a collective of F. N. S. Creek, Woodroofe

[12] Frederick Grisewood, *The World Goes By* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1952), 124.

and Ivan Sharpe, BBC sport on the National station became actually more elitist than previously. Creek was a grammar schoolboy in Darlington who joined up at eighteen, moved from the infantry to the Royal Flying Corps and won a VC as a second lieutenant. In 1919 he went up to Cambridge University where he won a Blue at soccer.[13]

Up to the end of 1930 boxing had been accorded just two live commentaries between 1923 and 1930, and no single commentator or expert assistant had emerged. The sport was rarely used as a broadcast subject save for historical talks on 'great pugilists in the past'. From 1931, however, Lionel Seccombe, a boxing blue in his Oxford days, was universally selected for commentaries and eye-witness accounts of bouts on National, nine in 1932, seven in 1933 and five in 1934. Coverage slumped in the 1935-6 period but when it picked up in 1937, Seccombe shared the work with Woodroofe and Marshall. To this point, this sport was one monopolised by public school-'Varsity products, individuals who fully met Reith's ideal criterion of the possession of classic dominant class credentials, enabling them to enter the field and remain, providing substantial amounts of social and cultural capital.

As we have seen, various staffers with executive authority were lukewarm about covering the 1936 summer Olympics in Berlin. The controversy surrounding Harold Abrahams, an assimilated Jew and Church of England worshipper, and the Nazis' virulent anti-Semitism also threatened a team of broadcasters being sent. However, the BBC did produce a small number of broadcasts. Harold Abrahams commentated on athletics events in tandem with Tommy Woodroofe (who narrated the opening ceremony broadcast), Capt. Venables, a BBC staffer, the rowing events, and W. J. Howcroft the swimming.[14] Howcroft's social origins were anomalous, coming from petit-bourgeois stock but by 1936 he came heavily endowed

[13] Peter Minto, *The Flying Sportsman: A Biography of FNS Creek* (Cirencester: Mereo, 2013), 8, 9, 28, 33.
[14] WAC R47/578/1 Olympic Games 1936, Berlin.

with expertise and cultural capital as a coach of exceptional renown having coached Britain's Olympic swimmers individually and collectively, and having been engaged by both Cambridge and Oxford University teams.[15]

From 1936 the BBC began to widen the scope of its sports product. The relationship of a sport to the national class structure dictated the social class of their mediators. Polo from Hurlingham commenced in May with a talk by Lord Astor MP on London Regional, and point-to-pointing in March, with a meeting of the Duke of Beaufort's hunt on Midland. These innovations led to two new commentary voices featuring regularly: Major Geoffrey Phipps-Hornby covered polo and point-to-pointing, Major H. F. Faudel-Phillips covered equestrian events. The latter's family held a baronetcy from 1897 to 1941, first granted for services to India to Sir George Faudel-Phillips who, like his father, was Mayor of London.[16] Phipps-Hornby, educated at Eton and Sandhurst, was the product of a landed-gentry family with an established tradition of high-ranking navy and army service. Air racing, a sport of the wealthy with extremely strong connections to the Royal Air Force, became somewhat fashionable in the early-thirties and from 1931 the BBC covered the Schneider Cup. Squadron Leader W. Helmore of the RAF became the sport's principal commentator with Sir Robert McLean, chairman of the prestigious Vickers Aviation and Sir Phillip Sassoon, chairman of the Royal Aeronautical Club and a member of one of the world's richest families, also taking the microphone.

The two motor sports, motor cycle and motor racing and the attendant hill-climbing – especially the Shelsley Walsh event from 1933 - were more regularly broadcast after 1933.

[15] Dave Day, "Crawling to Success: Swimming Coach Bill Howcroft" (2017), https://www.playingpasts.co.uk/articles/swimming/crawling-to-success-swimming-coach-bill-howcroft/.
[16] Joseph Jacobs and Isidore Harris, "Faudel Phillips, Sir George, Bart," (undated), accessed June 10, 2019, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6039-faudel-phillips-sir-george-bart.

These broadcasts in both inter-war decades were colonised by the men from the educated classes who wrote about the motor sports in their specialist press. Competitors were from a slightly more elevated social echelon, and in the case of Francis Curzon, 5th Earl Howe, who made six broadcasts in the mid-thirties, significantly more so. F. J. Findon, Graham Walker, Alan Hess and Major Vernon Brook, now a broadcasting veteran, mediated almost every event. Findon was the son of an author and spoke with an RP accent.[17] Walker, educated at Highgate school, was recommended to Broadcasting House by Victor Smythe, the long-serving and dominant North station figure, and was favoured for his "voice and manner" according to OB chief de Lotbinière.[18] Census records show German-born Hess to have gentlemanly habitus, his father being an "attorney-at-law."[19]

Shooting was perhaps of minor importance but each year the King's Prize event was featured from the Bisley Camp. Captain E. H. Robinson narrated the event with unfailing regularity, assisted in 1938 and 1939 by de Lotbinière himself. According to *Radio Times* this was an event "primarily for marksmen." Robinson fulfilled most of the required criteria for the ideal type of commentator having not only a dominant class military background but considerable relevant sporting expertise having won the Prize himself in 1923.[20] He had also had a distinguished military career after having attended the elite Adams Grammar School before St. John's, Cambridge.[21]

Two other late-thirties recruits to commentary, whose personal biographies support the class continuity argument, were E. W. Swanton (cricket) and Henry Longhurst (golf). Longhurst,

[17] BBC Sound Archive, 1CL001, 1966 Motor Racing, Campbell Trophy, F.J. Finden, Brooklands, May 1, 1937; 1881 Census returns.
[18] Murray Walker, *My Autobiography – Unless I'm Very Much Mistaken* (London: *Harper* Collins, 2002), 18.
[19] For Hess, also see 1891 Census returns.
[20] *Radio Times*, July 7, 1932, 65.
[21] *The Moseleians Association*, accessed April 28, 2018, https://moseleians.co.uk/people/former-headteachers/robinson-major-ernest-harold/.

educated at Bedford, Charterhouse and Clare College, Cambridge, where he won a golf Blue and was captain for one year, made a joint talk with a caddie in 1935 but made his first eye-witness account in 1937 on the Midland station. Swanton began by broadcasting 'Topical Talks' for the News Department in 1938 on both rugby union and cricket. His first National broadcast was in 1938, a year whence first-hand reports on county grounds became regular features for the first time. His big breakthrough came when, after lobbying for the work exceptionally hard, he was sent out to South Africa to report on the MCC tour to that country in the winter of 1938-39. Longhurst had to wait until after the war – during which he became a Conservative MP – to become an established fixture in BBC golf. Both men were friends, and as young lawyers shared a flat in the Temple in central London, but both wanted to break into sports journalism and broadcasting and both succeeded.

The single exception to the rule is the rise of Raymond Glendenning in the later 1930s. He emerged in Ulster on the Northern Ireland station and straddles the energies of both continuity and change. His social origins are not revealed in his memoir but he attended Newport High School in South Wales, one of no obvious distinction, but he studied for a Batchelor of Commerce at University College, London before qualifying as a chartered accountant.[22] His rise as a broadcaster was gradual, via London as an announcer in 1931 – "the lowest form of broadcasting life"[23] - the Cardiff station and, more importantly the Belfast station (from 1933), where by 1937 he was principal commentator on motor cycling and motor racing, sports whose social milieux were strongly elitist. His diversification into point-to-point and horse racing strongly suggests his acceptability to the Ulster socially advantaged. It was not until 1938 that he was used in soccer, where he gave commentaries,

[22] Raymond Glendenning, *A Word In Your Ear* (London: Stanley & Paul, 1953), 20.
[23] Ibid.

one more than the most important figure in the sport there to that point, J. W. McConnell.[24] By then Glendenning had made a small impression on the mainland in motor racing and cycling broadcasts – 1936 and 1937 – as a third commentator. His National station breakthrough came in October 1938 assisting Woodroofe on the Cambridgeshire from Newmarket. He quickly became first soccer commentator for the 1938-39 season back in Ulster but until war came his only National broadcasts were on the Cambridgeshire and the Cesarewitch. Then he was used on war time football on the new Home Service four times and once on a boxing commentary, so ending the period on an upward trajectory.

Class-bound Attitudes: The BBC and their Mediators of Sport

To understand the culture of the BBC which drove its practices, the outcome of which decided who would or would not mediate sports output, making an investigation of internal documents held at the BBC Written Archive Centre is, on paper at least, a sound idea. The problem, however, is that evidence which uncovers the causal element of decision-making is thin on the ground.

A detailed memo from Talks staffer Mary Adams is a notable exception. In organising a series entitled 'Sports and Pastimes' in 1933 she reveals that in her case at least, selections were made according to personal preferences but within existing BBC guidelines. Wrestling is considered but the question, "is this too vicious a subject?" is posed; greyhound racing receives consideration too but, Adams asks, "I believe there is a ban, isn't there?" Brigadier-General Critchley, the person most responsible for introducing this new form of dog racing in Britain, is discounted - "I imagine Critchley is too contaminated?" - but "how about a trainer

[24] The Northern Ireland Region was making more soccer outside broadcasts than any other station in the late-thirties; it made forty-two in 1938.

on practical points?"[25] She suggests Larry Gains for boxing but asks, "too black?" The document shows that for all the constant self-referencing of the BBC's dignity and sense of decency, staff members could be blunt about their views to the point of brutality. For example, in 1933, the Talks Department's Miss Adams, reviewing suggestions for a series of 'Saturday Sports Talks' commented on one mediator: "Cycling - the famous old Bidlake has just died, so we shall be saved from him."[26] The single affirmative comment is one that shows that the fact that soccer dominated the list – it was used three times - was due to the "high interest" in the sport, less a concession to class than an acceptance that popular subjects required the BBC to reflect the fact. In soccer's case it ensured that each year it was the most broadcast sport.

A year later de Lotbinière, still in the Talks Department, was making talk suggestions on the basis of novelty – parachute jumping and "the strong man." This answered the call for 'brighter programming,' a common press trope of the period.[27] The sub-textual motive of caving into press pressure appears may be present, with the number of newspaper weekly radio columnists, many of them critical, increasing in both number and intensity during this part of the thirties.[28] In May 1935, de Lotbinière is "anxious" to have a sports talk on hiking, and suggests discussion between "an old man who used to go walking in the 'eighties, and a young member of the Y.H.A."[29] The fact that it is impossible to divine his reasoning for this with certainty outlines the limitation of such documents. It seems to show de Lotbinière responding to criticism he received from senior colleagues for a lack of imagination in his work, though it reveals little about mediator choice as it is not clear what social class of

[25] WAC R51/565/1, Sports Talks File 1a 1932-37, Lotbinière to Pocock, March 1934.
[26] WAC R51/565/1, Sports Talks, 1a 1932-37, Miss Adams to Rendall, September 28, 1933. The same memo did at least recognize his achievements: "F T Bidlake. At one time he was the holder of the 50 mile, 100 mile, 12 hour and 24 hour tricycle records, both on road and track, and he still retains the 24 hour tricycle track record which he put up in 1893."
[27] Pegg, *Broadcasting & Society*, 207.
[28] Nicholas, "Media History or Media Histories?" 386.
[29] WAC R51/565/1, Sports Talks, 1a 1932-37, Lotbinière to Pocock, February 2, 1935.

"young member" he had in mind for the broadcast.[30] Ironically, a senior colleague demanded a simpler talk in the studio, perhaps on ground of cost.

A rather different kind of ambiguity can be found in a memo involving News Department staffer Richard Dimbleby in 1936. He wrote to the Director of the Midland station to express the unsuitability of Geoffrey Partridge, a new voice from that region, for microphone work.

> …my opinion of him is that he was quite sound in material and judgement, but at times his voice was rather "refained". I don't mean this in any sarcastic sense because refined voices are supposed to be nice to listen to, but I think that in describing soccer, particularly for the bulk of listeners of the lower and middle classes, we do not want a vigorous and not necessarily too cultured voice. This is a very minor point, however. I liked Partridge and I shall certainly use him again with your co-operation.[31]

Dimbleby here displays class awareness in being concerned about lower class reaction to a dominant class 'posh' accent, which is notable as is the evidence that executive decisions considered lowering the tone of BBC accents. Only 3-5% of the population spoke with 'received pronunciation' in the nineteenth century and it is very doubtful that it was any higher in 1936.[32] Reith was known to approve of 'improving' the speech of the population but also concerned that accent could be off-putting to listeners of even middle-class status. However, Dimbleby's concern is not so great as to prevent Partridge from continuing to broadcast. Even more ambiguity surrounds a comment made by Head of Talks, Sir Richard Maconachie, one from a traditional upper middle-class background, in 1937. He regarded

[30] See Seymour Joly de Lotbinière's staff file at WAC.
[31] WAC R51/346/1, News Sports Talks, Richard Dimbleby (News Dept.) to Mr. Morris, Midlands Regional Director, November 18, 1936.
[32] Lynda Mugglestone, *Talking Proper, The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). 262.

Bernard Darwin, the BBC's established golf reporter "definitely too upper class to be ideal" for a 'Coronation Week Sports Talk', despite the purity of Maconachie's own class status and career: Tonbridge and University College, Oxford; British Minister in Kabul, 1929 to 1935 and a knighthood.[33] And yet his alternatives to Darwin were G. O. "Gubby" Allen (Eton and Cambridge), Lord Lonsdale (an earl) and Tom Walls, a racing trainer and actor-manager, the son of a plumber and builder.[34] The decision to engage a son of a Baronet, R. T. Trotter-Hodge, for a talk a month later suggests that Maconachie's concern about mediators being too socially elevated was perhaps less than genuine, as does the fact that three other peers and four knights were involved in sports broadcasts at other times during that year.

Rather more straightforward in meaning is Gerald Cock's attempt to find suitable voices for America's Cup yachting output in 1934. Whilst deciding that an item on Britain's boat, *Endeavour*, he wrote to its master designer and builder Charles E. Nicholson asking him to come up to London to record a piece "about the design of the ship, and some of the problems involved?[35] The rest of the memo forms a neat statement of BBC policy.

> I wonder if you could let me know who is the greatest authority, with a pleasant voice and personality, on yachting with special reference to the America Cup; that is, someone who would give us a brief but really satisfactory history of the Cup...

Nicholson recommended Major Malden Heckstall Smith - "He has the right knowledge and keenness on yachting." Cock's doubts - "...we know about him but I did not know whether he

[33] WAC R51/346/1, News Sports Talks, Maconachie to Ass. Director Talks, March 19, 1937.
[34] Sean Fielding, revised by Robert Sharp, "Walls, Tom Kirby (1883-1949)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (September 2004, revised January 2011), https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-36710?rskey=9ASRHe&result=1.
[35] WAC R30/38, America's Cup 1934-59, Cock to Mr. Nicholson, August 2,1934, Nicholson to Cock, August 4, 1934.

had the right voice and personality" – were met with assurances from Nicholson that the Major "knows Endeavour" and technical details about her much better than Mr. Scott Hughes [*The Times* yachting correspondent]," but, he finishes, "I rather doubt whether a statement by either of our foremen about the construction would be quite appropriate." The attitude to foremen they both display, there not being "quite appropriate" underlines the continuance of Reithian lower-class exclusionism.

A system of virtual class apartheid is also evidence in archival documents surrounding one of the frequent commentator tests held by de Lotbinière in 1936 and 1937. Now Head of Outside Broadcasting (Cock left to head the new television operation) he was very perturbed about the quality of the narrators he found at his disposal.[36] Haynes appears correct in stating that, "As broadcasting became a viable career opportunity so the BBC was flooded with aspirant announcers and commentators."[37] Notes written during these tests provide some insight into class attitudes at the BBC at that time, particularly the extent to which accent and therefore social class was a factor in selection policy. Though the document is unsigned, the definitive nature of the notes suggests the hand of either Lotbinière himself or his assistant, Snagge.[38] Two candidates are dismissed partly on these grounds: Stanley Longstaff and T. B. Sinclair both had a "slight cockney accent" which should be read as a criticism. In both cases their commentary was "poor" and both "no good." However, three from a higher social stratum are ruled out for other reasons.[39] Mrs. A. E. Samuels' "voice rules her out." It is "strident" and has "unattractive inflections." Miss Woodward's voice also sees her rejected; her commentary is "uninspired." She is "No good." John Doxat's voice is "Average cultured but quite undistinguished..." his commentary is "Poorish" and he too is "No good." Another

[36] See, WAC R30/428/I, Commentators, JS/EAB (??) to MRD, Mr Gretton, August 14, 1936.
[37] Richard Haynes, "'Lobby' and the Formative Years of Radio Sports Commentary, 1935 – 52," *Sport in History*, 29, no.1 (March 2009), 31
[38] WAC R30/428/1 Commentators.
[39] This is inferred from their addresses as well as notes on their voices.

probable middle-class candidate "C. Whitaker Wilson" was found to have a "rather unattractive voice and diction."[40] Only an Irishman, A. W. Dobbin, was received positively, his voice "Pleasant cultured very good continuity; imaginative and phrases well chosen. Promising."[41] The document comes close to an overt statement of BBC class exclusionism in its flat rejection of "cockney" voices. Nominally a demonym to denote those born within the sound of the bells of Bow church in east London, it was used by the dominant class of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century to denote a non-RP speaker and used pejoratively.[42] It is used in this way in the document, whose function is to exclude on the grounds of inferior social class.[43] "Cultured" is used by the writer to define the potential for inclusion in the field of BBC mediators. De Lotbinière stated that in his commentator searches he was looking for a "first class artist."[44] The presence of social class sub-text in the phrase is moot, but given its context the presumption should be that it signifies coalescence with class Reithianism. The test document and the test itself show Bourdieu's theory of habitus in action. However, dominant class habitus was not sufficient alone to gain entry to the field.

Interacting cross-currents of notional suitability were at work that had to be managed by BBC staff. A good example of this can be found in the Northern region's Roger Wilson expressing his view of a prominent MCC Committee member, Mr. R. H. Mallett as a giver of talks. "He is an old man of about eighty who writes the most dreadful stuff, which, when entirely re-written, he broadcasts extremely well."[45] He adds. "For fifty years at least he has been on the

[40] The inclusion of Mais on this list of trialists is odd because by this time he had already made over 200 broadcasts on the BBC. He specialized in literary subjects and from 1931 can be said to be one of the Corporation's most heard voices on the air.
[41] Dobbin shows up in press reports of lawn tennis and croquet matches in the local Cork and Ulster press, e.g., *Dublin Daily Express*, 1906, *Cork Examiner*, 1908, *Northern Whig*, 1928 and1932 where he is listed as "Major A. W. Dobbin."
[42] *Oxford English Dictionary* (Second edition) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
[43] See Mugglestone, *Talking Proper*, 88.
[44] WAC R/30/428/1, Scottish Cup Final, S de L.to O.B. Assistant, Edinburgh, March 31, 1939.
[45] WAC R51/346/1, News Sports Talks, Roger Wilson to John Green, July 2, 1937, re. "Background to Sport, Cricket." Mallett's *Wisden* obituary at *ESPN cricinfo*, accessed November 10, 2017, http://www.espncricinfo.com/wisdenalmanack/content/story/228187.html.

inside of the MCC and County organisations." An individual who wrote poor copy was redeemed by broadcasting skill, expertise and from connectedness to constituted cricket authority.

Talks executive Adams, again in 1936, commented negatively on a lawn tennis talk, given by "...a universally recognised arch nitwit called Norman Dabbs. He does in fact umpire at Wimbledon, but to my knowledge is not much thought of."[46] Another issue in selection may well have been one of scarcity of suitable candidates to broadcast. For example, Lotbinière's 1936 estimation of the quality of Percy Fender's reporting on England v. New Zealand test matches was not high: "Subject matter good. Speech quality not very good. Always has difficulty in finishing or beginning neatly."[47] Despite these problems, in 1938 Fender gave sixteen broadcasts (fourteen on National) and in 1939, twenty-two (twenty on National), illustrating his status as one of the chief commentators on cricket.

The small number of items presented here indicates the limitations of this particular archive for the researcher looking for definitive reasoning for sports mediator choices. However, they do confirm several known aspects of BBC culture with reference to class. Lower-class individuals were not actively sought for sports mediation where they might have been. As we saw in Cock's search for a talk on *Endeavour* and the commentator tests, BBC decision-makers could, had they wanted, brought more lower-class individuals into the cohort of mediators but chose not to. There is no evidence in the many WAC files examined for this project that any active attempt whatsoever was made to end the dominant class hegemony of the sports microphone in the 1930s, a view confirmed by the use of Mallett and Fender.

[46] Myers was lawn tennis correspondent to the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Field* until his death in 1939. He played amateur tournaments in the early 1920s into his mid-40s. WAC R51/565/1, Sports Talks File 1a 1932-37, Miss Adams to C (P), July 25, 1936.
[47] WAC R/30/428/1, Commentators 1936-39, August 5, 1937.

Secondly, Dimbleby and Maconachie's views confirm the preferred choice of individuals from the middle and upper middle classes to make reports, talks and to commentate (members of the aristocracy were also preferred). Conversely, Dimbleby's concern about a potential recruit displaying the accent component of typical dominant class habitus rather too stridently seems to show that the BBC now believed that too obvious displays of class superiority were out of tune with the mid-1930s zeitgeist.

Mediator Outliers 1928-39: Bill Hobbiss, Willie Smith, Charlie Garner, Harry Barrington Dalby and Stewart MacPherson

Though broad Reithian policy did not change, external pressure from listener letters and newspaper critics moved the BBC in a more popular direction during the 1930s. Press criticism was a constant thorn in Reith's side during his tenure, especially from 1930 when the first designated radio column was established in the *Daily Herald*, as was the grumbling from the benches of the House of Commons on a range of issues.[48] Two critics, Sydney Moseley and Collie Knox, became household names, so strongly did their columns reflect public opinion. The tone of the attacks focussed on supposed dullness, conservatism and anti-populism. Sunday programming's concentrated focus on the sacred also regularly came in for strong criticism. According to Eric Maschwitz, the programme builders and producers rushed to find the morning papers "see what the critics had to say."[49]

The growing size of the non-dominant class audience and the fearsome extent of the economic and social crisis that hit Britain in 1930 acted as further stimulus for change. A

[48] Briggs, *Golden Age of Wireless*, 24; Siân Nicholas, "Towards an integrated history of the British media: the case of the newspaper "radio column" in the 1930s," Aberystwyth University research paper (undated), 4-6. An electronic copy of this unpublished paper was kindly provided by the author; Nicholas, "Media History or Media Histories?" 384-7.
[49] Reported in Sydney Moseley, *Broadcasting in My Time* ([S.I.]: Rich & Cowan Ltd, 1935), 65, quoted in Briggs, ibid.

small amount of output reflected the latter event. After approaching unemployment largely as a technical issue – and at great depth in 1931 – in 1932 it began to make programmes about the lives of the workers, principally in the winter of 1932-33 with Howard Marshall's *Other People's Houses* series which largely examined slum condition in British cities. Pat Forrest, an ex-Durham miner, trained pit manager and playwright, wrote and narrated the series *Underground Britain* in late-1934. This represented a stark departure for the Corporation, at last making a set of programmes which depicted working-class life by someone from the working class.[50] But it did not merit a national broadcast, going out on the Northern regional station. Another series focusing on everyday life, *All in a Day's Work*, was broadcast to a national audience. In the third of just three programmes, Forrest featured Jimmy Seed, football manager (then at Charlton Athletic). This was his only foray into working-class sport.[51] However, the increasing appeal of and participation in sport among the general public which was noticed after the Great War did not abate in the 1930s. Outlets for sporting enjoyment and satisfaction increased commensurately. Middle-class sport developed in the form of significant increases in the number of lawn tennis and golf clubs, a growth encouraged by widespread suburban expansion. Ice hockey, water polo, netball and table tennis also experienced significant growth. Sports with greater working-class appeal, speedway, greyhound racing, darts and snooker won considerable popularity too in a nation state where, outside the chronic deprivation of the cities and towns dependent for economic comfort upon the declining staple industries, real wages rose from the mid-1930s.[52] The BBC

[50] Forrest also helped organise a broadcast on the world of the hop picker the same year and had a play set in a pit broadcast in the Northern Region in 1936. In his article on the "'oppin'" programme Forrest referenced the fact that he once worked on a Kent farm. This and the tone of the article all but confirm his working-class origins. *Radio Times,* September 7, 1934, 616.

[51] Seed had been a collier after leaving school at fourteen years of age near Consett, Northumberland. See "Football Remembers Christmas Truce Education Pack," *British* Council Schools Online, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20160304102903/https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/sites/so/files/football_remembers-pack-full.pdf.

[52] Mike Huggins, "Quantifying Leisure Trends: the Problems and Possibilities of Census Data," in Robert Snape and Helen Pussard, eds. *Recording Leisure Lives: Histories, Archives and Memories of Leisure in Twentieth Century Britain*, Leisure Studies Association (2009), 21.

was swept along with the upsurge in interest in these sports – save greyhound racing. It would have been out of keeping with its claim to be a truly national broadcaster if it had done otherwise. The years 1937-1939 saw a sharp rise in sports programming, ninety different sports and pastimes being broadcast at least once. The broadcasting of 'new' sports of the period such as snooker, table tennis, darts, ice hockey and speedway, the five receiving most broadcast output, represented innovation. These were mediated by members of the social elite, but these too were fresh voices: Woodroofe, Grisewood and Glendenning. But five men from outside this class emerged to have significant broadcasting careers: Bill Hobbiss, Willie Smith, Harry Dalby, Stewart McPherson and Charlie Garner.

Hobbiss from 1928 worked on the annual BBC transmission of the Grand National "assisting" commentator Geoffrey Gilbey. In his race preview he described Hobbiss as "one of the soundest judges of racing in this country" and that "we worked together while I was on the Racing Specialist," which may explain his engagement.[53] According to one well-informed later racing expert, Hobbiss was irascible but a gifted assessor and advisor to professional trainers.[54] He was from petty-bourgeois stock, his father a piano tuner and both grandfathers builders of indeterminate wealth. In 1923 he played cricket at Lord's for the Sporting Press v. The Jockeys scoring 48 not out.[55] In the twenties Hobbiss was also writing for the *Morning Chronicle*, living in Westcliff-on-Sea. In the thirties he lived in Leigh-on-Sea and was writing for *The Sporting Life*. If this suggests middle-class status, his recorded 1934 voice shows that he dwelled in one of its lowest fractions. Refusing or unable to reproduce the sound of received pronunciation, his accent and diction are emphatically non-RP, for example in his pronunciation, "side-be-side" instead of "side-by-side."[56] In the 1935 Grand

[53] *Radio Times*, March 23, 1928, 592.
[54] Peter O'Sullevan, *Calling the Horses – A Racing Autobiography* (London: Stanley Paul, 1989), 10.
[55] *The Sportsman*, September 11, 1923, "W. M. Hobbiss dominated the batting."
[56] BBC Sound Archive, 1cl0067237, Grand National by W. Hobbiss and R. C. Lyle, March 23, 1934.

National broadcast, seven years after their first co-broadcast, Hobbiss refers to Lyle as "Mr. Lyle" on four occasions, demonstrably suggesting a master-servant relationship between the two co-workers.[57] Hobbiss worked on the Grand National from 1928 to 1937 but at the National of that year he was deemed "not satisfactory" by members of the Programme Board.[58] The following year Lyle was retained but not Hobbiss, his place being taken by the non-sports specialist but dominant class Tommy Woodroofe. In the 1939 war census he was listed as "unemployed racing journalist."[59] The use of Bill Hobbiss for a decade represents a breach with dominant class commentator hegemony, especially in view of his inability or refusal to successfully impersonate the sound of an RP speaker. His self-placement in a deferential position to Capt. Lyle, "Bobby" on air to a dominant class colleague, acts to mend this breach, however. His expertise capital performs the same function. Thus Hobbiss is simultaneously both anomalous and typical. After Hobbiss, Archie Stock took over the role as a specialist race reading commentator in 1938 and 1939, demonstrating continuity with the policy of using lower-class race readers doubling as junior commentators. Stock was the son of a merchant's clerk in 1891 and a furniture packer in 1901.[60] Wilfrid Taylor, "one of the star members of the Press Association staff," was used in the same capacity in 1939.[61] J. Lawson Topham was used as a co-commentator from 1936. No relation to the Aintree racecourse-owning family, his class category was no higher than petit bourgeois, but his was a rising social trajectory exemplified by his marriage to the daughter of an engineer. With a pronounced Yorkshire accent, he was unable to progress beyond a "No. 2" position.[62]

[57] BBC Sound Archive, 924189, Grand National 1935.
[58] WAC R34/600/9 Programme Board Minutes 1937.
[59] 1939 Register.
[60] 1891 and 1901 Census returns.
[61] *Daily Herald*, December 30, 1939.
[62] BBC Sound Archive, 1CL006745, St. Leger, September 8, 1937, J. L. Topham and Richard North; Census returns 1881 and 1901.

Willie Smith was arguably the best billiards player in the world just after the Great War. He won the world championship in 1920 and 1923. The author J. P. W. Mallalieu compared him with the greatest snooker player of the inter-war period, Joe Davis, writing in 1952, "Smith and Davis are of different generations - and not merely in age. Whereas Smith, with his northern accent and his northern clothes and northern manners, belongs to the school which says 'I am a great billiards-player. If you don't like the rest of me, you can lump it...'"[63] Smith too was irascible, difficult, being "constantly at odds with the governing body about contracts or changes to rules and equipment" and other matters.[64] His father was of extremely humble origins, Born William A. Goldie he was an orphan in 1861 but adopted by a local sports journalist at a conservative Darlington newspaper who later ran a pub. Willie was an apprentice printer at fourteen, later becoming a linotype operator before turning professional at billiards in 1913. His war record consisted of working in a munitions factory.[65] In fine, he was the antithesis of the favoured type of person for sports broadcasting in our period. However, his supreme skill was powerful capital to programme builders. The Conservative Prime Minister Arthur Balfour placed himself in the front row of a Smith exhibition, at one point during which he spoke to the player: "Smith: how do you play that screw-back shot?"[66] Willie Smith piloted thirty-five of forty-five billiards and snooker broadcasts between 1937 and 1939: he monopolised them.[67]

It was highly exceptional for a petty-bourgeois northerner to be given the role of mediating a sport with aristocratic, country house origins. The fact that he mediated the professional

[63] Joseph Mallalieu, "Return to Snooker," January 25, 1952: *The Spectator*, http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/25th-january-1952/9/return-to-billiards.
[64] Tony Rennick, "Smith, George, William," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-65064?.
[65] *Northern Echo,* "Willie the billiards star and record breaker" (27 February 2002), https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/7083247.willie-the-billiards-star-and-world-record-breaker/.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Willie Smith is the only person whose broadcasting career spans the entire inter-war history of BBC radio sport: he made his first talk in 1923.

game, however, goes some way to explaining the choice. Since the mid-1920s, the BBC had used world class professionals to give talks on the game, particularly world champions and acknowledged masters such as Tom Aitken, Tom Newman and Melbourne Inman, lower-class men all. Given the dominant class taste for billiards, this is a mysterious anomaly requiring further investigation. Smith should be assumed to have been an efficient communicator or de Lotbinière would surely have replaced him or found someone from a higher class status to share the load on the evidence of many archival documents.[68] However, he was not asked to give talks, which suggests that the Talks department did not find his accent sufficiently congenial. As Arthur Lloyd James of the Advisory Committee on Spoken English put it in 1928, "It is nowadays considered those who aspire to be regarded as cultured and educated should pay a due respect to the conventions that govern educated and cultivated speech."[69] George Allison was one who did this, developing a mannered form of hyper-corrected speech which resulted in him carving out a successful broadcasting career.[70] Newsreel evidence from 1933 shows that Smith did not do this, the regional markers of his Darlington accent being clearly in evidence.[71] He did appear in a more informal setting twice near the war, at *The Ulster Inn*, on the Northern Ireland station with Charles Garner and on Howard Marshall's *At Home to Sportsmen*. For all his greatness as a player only once did *Radio Times* go beyond printing "commentary by Willie Smith," thus rather understating his authority as a sportsman. In a decade when *RT* sub-editors were not slow to point out a speaker's connection to status positions this may be connected to Smith's unwillingness to bend to the expectations of dominant class BBC staff, rubbing against the grain of the Corporation's stated mission to raise standards of speech which had not altered since 1922.

[68] See primarily WAC R30/629/1, Commentators, 1936-40.
[69] Arthur Lloyd James, *Broadcast English, Collected and Transcribed by A. Lloyd-James* (London: BBC, 1928), 6, quoted in Mugglestone, *Talking Proper*, 327.
[70] See for example, BBC Sound Archive, DD04004068 Everton v. Manchester City F. A. Cup Final, April 1933 and 1CL0067250, Manchester City V Portsmouth, FA Cup Final, 1934.
[71] British Pathé News film, "Take a Cue" (1933), April 13, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dsv2BplEh7A.

A lesser figure before the war but still notable as a boxing commentator was Harry Dalby, better known as H. Barrington Dalby, to BBC insiders as "Barrie". His family was petty bourgeois, his father a clerk, then clerk-cum-singing teacher, then piano and singing teacher "working from home." Three grandparents worked in education, one an industrial school officer, the other two were schoolteachers. Dalby described himself as the son of a professional singer who taught him to box.[72] After naval service (1915-18) he migrated to London to work on the railways but became a boxing referee who rose to the first rank. He was recruited to BBC work through boxing's Board of Control recommending him to de Lotbinière as an experienced referee and after passing a voice test.[73] De Lotbinière was not impressed with Dalby's work, however, and limited him strictly to "in-between rounds stuff."[74]

A 1966 recording of Dalby shows him to have modified his speech to an approximation of RP but an accusation of snobbery on Lotbinière's part is conjectural.[75]At that time he was apparently "developing Jack Hood."[76] A former British and European welter-weight champion, Hood had been used by the National station for a talk on boxing for the Monday *Sports and Pastimes* series, an eye-witness account of the November 1933 Neusal-Harvey fight and a 'Saturday Sports Talk' in April 1934. But after his account of a Police v. Army fixture for Midland in December 1936, his broadcasting career petered out.[77] Hood's class background leaned slightly further to the *classes populaires* than did Dalby's, his maternal grandfather being a brick-maker, his paternal grandfather a pearl button maker and his father

[72] 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891 Census returns; W. Barrington-Dalby, *Come in, Barry!* (London: Cassell, 1961), 2.
[73] Barrington-Dalby, *Come in, Barry!* 12, 14.
[74] WAC R30/428/1, Head of OBs to Midlands Regional Director, December 21, 1936.
[75] The source is an excerpt from the BBC's broadcast of the Muhammad Ali-Henry Cooper fight, May 25, 1966, commentator Barrington-Dalby. Roger Wilmut, "Wilmut's World Wide Weblog," accessed March 12, 2018, https://rfwilmut.net/audio/2007/0621.html.
[76] WAC R30/428/1, Head of OBs to Midlands Regional Director, December 21, 1936.
[77] WAC R30/428/1, Boxing Commentators, Midlands Regional Director to Lotbinière, December 17, 1936.

a bootmaker. Given de Lotbinière's apparent attention to detail in trying to improve commentator quality it is possible that he believed neither Hood nor Dalby lacked the necessary tools of the high quality communicator or that their voices were insufficiently RP. His comment to a Scottish regional station staffer in 1939 on a London working-class boxing commentator - "Titchener is all right for East End boxing", i.e., satisfactory for low prestige working-class boxing broadcasts but not for broadcasting to a middle-class audience shows that accent remained a key criterion in the process of deciding who might be invited to mediate sport.[78] Used on four occasions in 1938 – one on National, three on London Regional - before presumably being discarded, Titchener was accorded more respect from *Radio Times*. "Dan Titchener, commentator for the evening, is a man of untiring energy, working in the docks by day, and coaching various clubs during his evenings" ran the copy of the preview to his hour and twenty minutes commentary on "Amateur Inter Club Boxing, Catford and District v. Fitzroy Lodge" on 28 November.[79] He was "closely associated with amateur boxing as a trainer and referee" according to the same source earlier in the month for an Albert Hall boys boxing broadcast. Titchener lacked typical BBC credentials for prestige sporting events but Lotbinière's "alright for East End boxing" was disparaging in the context of a lengthy memo spelling out, in characteristic depth, a schema for sports broadcasting and in all probability social class orientated.

Had Dalby joined the ranks of boxing commentators at this point he would have been alone in not having attended public school and the 'Varsity: as Seccombe faded from the picture Marshall, and Woodroofe became principals in 1938 while in 1939 the small number of broadcast fights were largely given to Woodroofe with Glendenning and Snagge at the margins. The Talks Department had selected him to make a broadcast on refereeing back in

[78] WAC R/30/428/1, Scottish Cup Final, S de L. to O.B. Assistant, Edinburgh, March 31, 1937.
[79] *Radio Times*, November 25, 1938, 32.

August 1936 but it was his only National broadcast as a soloist before the War. Though un-credited he remained a "No. 2" on the small number of bouts broadcast in 1936 and 1937. News also used him to make a small number of 'Topical Talks' in 1938, including a review of boxing in 1937. From June 1938 his work as between-rounds summariser was finally credited in *Radio Times* and from this position he developed great popularity. Boxing became a sporting staple during the war and Dalby was its resident summariser. In 1942 he was a guest of Roy Plomley on *Desert Island Discs*. He made a few solo broadcasts too, but it was in 1944 that his BBC status rose dramatically. He was a resident guest on 1939's *Calling All Sportsmen*, where a quartet of notable sports people answered listeners' queries. By the time it ended in 1947 he was one of sports radio's major figures. Harry Carpenter, a post-war boxing television commentator and presenter described him as "a star" when he was a young listener. Dalby continued to broadcast regularly from a ringside seat until the mid-1960s.[5] Yet in 1936 de Lotbinière did not find him worthy of developing as a BBC sports mediator beyond "doing in between rounds stuff" on boxing broadcasts.[80]

Stuart MacPherson's early BBC career supports the hypothesis that de Lotbinière's testing system was a failure. His entry to the commentator field is worthy of close study as it provides a sharp insight into the working practices of the OB Department and the habitus of John Snagge in particular. MacPherson made his first broadcast in 1937 but, unlike Dalby, he actively sought an opportunity to work for the BBC - from the autumn of 1936 as an ice hockey commentator. The rise in popularity of his sport in Britain in the mid-thirties led to interest at the OB Department in broadcasting matches thanks to the initiation of a "virtually professional" club league in 1936 and heavy lobbying by senior figures in the sport,

[80] WACR30/428/1, memo Lotbinière to unnamed.

particularly H. Elvin, owner of Wembley Stadium and the Empire Pool.[81] Given the Canadians' domination of the Great Britain Olympic team and the league clubs in the 1920s and 1930s it was no surprise that Bob Bowman, a Canadian, became the sport's first specialist commentator. However, he had to virtually force himself on Gerald Cock, convincing him that he'd commentated on many matches and was "damn good." He was tested and used at the first opportunity in March 1935.[82] Before returning home in 1936 he made six commentaries: four on ice hockey, one on baseball and one on boxing.

MacPherson's described his "folks" as "modest, middle-class people. Father was local manager of the Massey-Harris company and I was given all the privileges that any such humble home could provide."[83] Though self-identifying as "middle-class" his background was wholly different to the same categorisation in the mother country, far removed from de Lotbinière's Quebequois privileged background.[84] His first job in London was as a Wembley shoe shop assistant but his love of ice hockey soon saw him writing match programme material at the Empire Pool for six guineas a week. This engaged him with systems of communication which alerted him to the understanding that the BBC was to begin broadcasting ice hockey matches and that "the man to see" was John Snagge.[85]

> Gradually I found out that he was a very difficult man to see...But I had to have a chat with Mr. Snagge so I went to his office in the great house off Oxford Circus. His secretary informed me blithely that he would be away for the entire day so I took a seat, opened a roll of newspapers and informed her I would wait. "But he will not be here to-

[81] Stewart Roberts, "The History of Ice Hockey" (2015), The Ice Hockey Annual website, http://www.icehockeyannual.co.uk/history_of_british_ice_hockey.php.
[82] For Bowman's extensive narrative of how he came to commentate on the BBC, see Bob Bowman, *On the Ice* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd, 1937), 3-5.
[83] Stewart MacPherson, *The Mike and I* (London: Home & Van Thal., 1948), 7.
[84] Haynes, "'Lobby'," 26.
[85] MacPherson, ibid., 35.

> day," she said petulantly. "It doesn't really matter," I said to her, "I have all day." She made me warm that chair for several hours but finally I was seated opposite John Snagge and he didn't look pleased at all. He was not the head of Outside Broadcasting but the man I had to impress...I didn't have much admiration for the manner in which he treated me...He was juggling a dozen enterprises for his boss, S. J. de Lotbinière, and he had little time for people who crashed the gate. Snagge was brusque with me. I thought he was stuffy – that he considered he was doing me a great favour by seeing me. I had the opinion that he fancied himself a god...[86]

This narrative elaborates with great clarity the playing out of habitus and capital in the field of BBC staffing. In Snagge's negation of MacPherson's presence we see the rules of the game in action and the former's feel for the game itself. At this point Snagge had been with the organisation for over a decade and as a key member of the OB Department, he was now a gatekeeper of entry to the field. MacPherson, culturally distant from British fields such as the BBC, seriously deficient in symbolic capital and without the 'feel' at this point, is excluded, a victim of Corporation symbolic violence.

However, in the autumn of 1936, prospective ice hockey commentator candidates were invited for a test at Wembley, along the same lines of Wakelam's success at Deer Park, Richmond in 1927. The accompanying notes are almost certainly either de Lotbinière's or Snagge's and include an assessment of MacPherson:

> McPherson [sic]: "Fluent; very Canadian; very dramatic, perfect knowledge of the game, but, having no humour like Bob Bowman, his rather overpowering American

[86] MacPherson, *The Mike & I*, 35-6.

> voice, all on one note, bores into one's head with the persistence of a pneumatic drill. Efficient, but very newspapery.[87]

These comments highlight the more negative of the varying BBC attitudes to North American people and ideas between the wars: at best ambivalent, rarely complimentary, at worst, hostile. Haynes agrees: "[This] assessment hints at a prevailing prejudice in the BBC for anything too 'American', too sensationalistic ('very newspapery') and too vulgar and far removed from 'standard English' for British audiences to bear ('overpowering')."[88] Yet MacPherson, like Bowman, was nominally a colonial cousin, making the patent antipathy to him significant. The two positive comments are almost overwhelmed by the notes of negativity. The comment regarding the drill is highly suggestive of an English ear attuned to the sound of gentlemanly voices such as Marshall, Woodroofe or Wakelam. The "newspapery" comment is suggestive of a directness not associated with British sports commentators. The conflation of Canadian with "American" demonstrates instinctive distaste for non-RP voices. The term "dramatic" is ambiguous. If Snagge is the author it is highly possible that he sought here to punish MacPherson for having the temerity to virtually demand an audience with him at the start of the process.

MacPherson failed the test.[89] The OB department's first choice was D. W. Miller – "Easily the best tested for ice hockey. A pleasing voice, very slightly Canadian; good continuity; fluent, good knowledge of the game...Not the least important is a pleasing personality". A second, for whom test notes are not available, "B. R. Taylor (Deans, Meopham Green, Kent)," was also chosen. His address is a class marker, placing him, at minimum, in some

[87] WAC R/30/428/1, 1936-39, undated "Report on Commentators" attached to follow up memo dated October 27, 1936.
[88] WAC "Report on Commentators," also Haynes, "'Lobby'," 33.
[89] He was informed via mail by Thomas Woodroofe. Letter, Woodroofe to SM, October 9, 1936, WAC RCont, Stewart Macpherson, OB Comm, File 1, 1936-62.

fraction of the bourgeoisie.[90] But Miller's star swiftly waned after just five broadcasts. Taylor was used three times, in February 1937. But a space now opened which MacPherson filled, thanks to Thomas Woodroofe, OB staffer and working commentators. His first broadcast, however, was on speedway, courtesy of a further test almost a calendar year after his first inquiry to the BBC, on 12 August 1937. It was arranged by Woodroofe and he passed well. But he had to undergo a second ice hockey test – on live play at Empire Pool, Wembley – before he was finally engaged for a real broadcast on 6 November at the same venue. And yet on 11 October 1937, Thomas Woodroofe told MacPherson that "It was a rather a neck and neck struggle..." to win the position, underlining his difficulty in his gaining entry to the field.[91]

The same month, Peter Pooley, Director of the Empire Service, wrote asking him, by recommendation of Woodroofe, to make a series of broadcasts on ice hockey on the Empire programme.[92] From this point he began commentating on matches from Harringay, Earl's Court, Wembley and Streatham on the London Regional station. By the end of 1939 he had commentated on ice hockey, speedway, cycling, swimming, table tennis, water polo and figure skating. More than this, a feature of his record is his being employed in major continuing events, for example the Six-Days Cycle Race, the world ice hockey tournament from Czechoslovakia, the European Swimming Championships and the English Table Tennis Championships. His ability to deliver accurate description at speed made him ideal for fast sports. "Stewart MacPherson rattled on like a machine-gun," said one later gentleman class commentator, not too appreciatively, perhaps.[93] What stands out here is the sheer weight of his itinerary in 1938 and 1939.

[90] Miller's address was "Alexandra Court, Empire Way, Wembley Park."
[91] WAC RCont, Stewart Macpherson, OB Comm, File 1, 1936-62.
[92] Ibid., letter from Pooley to MacPherson, November 19, 1937, as above.
[93] Robert Hudson, *Inside Outside Broadcasts* (Newmarket: R & W, 1993), 128.

But in February 1938 de Lotbinière illustrated the complexity of inter-class relationships at the BBC and the difficulty of attempting accurate analysis of the dominant class staff attitude to class outsiders. Writing to MacPherson during the ice hockey world championships in Prague, he says, "Thank you...for the excellent job you did for us last Saturday.[94] I don't think you could have done more..." There is personal warmth too in his sincere consideration for the condition of the commentator's heavily pregnant and none too fit wife. "I do appreciate how hard it is both on Mrs. MacPherson and you to be separated at this particular time," he wrote. It is possible that this is merely an exercise in old Etonian noblesse oblige, a superficial display of dominant class 'decency'. However, given Lotbinière's passion for raising and maintaining standards of commentating, it may also reflect his admiration for someone who, like Dalby, became a BBC radio "star."[95]

Charlie Garner is an exceptional figure in inter-war BBC history being the only avowedly working-class Londoner to achieve the status of regular sports commentator before the Second World War.[96] He achieved a national reputation acknowledged by *Radio Times*.[97] Yet in the same memo classifying and evaluating commentators where Dan Titchener was only "alright for East End boxing," Seymour Joly de Lotbinière classified Garner as "Miscellaneous - Garner (Darts and cockney occasions)." Most of his broadcasts were from London pubs: his sport was darts: he was Secretary of the National Darts Association. At the peak of his brief career he made ten running commentaries in 1939. Attitudes to this "cockney", a negative term at the BBC as has been already noted, are few in number in the flow of memos. One is disparaging. a note from July 1939 signed by Michael Standing "for

[94] Stewart MacPherson's Contributor File at WAC.
[95] See for example, his long 1942 essay in WAC R30 628/2. See also, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, *Trust to Talk* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 130; Hudson, *Inside Outside Broadcasts*, 11-12 and Brian Johnston, *It's Been a Lot of Fun* (London: Allen, 1976), 82.
[96] *London Sound Survey*, Charles Garner commentating skittles match in 1938, posted April 13, 2014, http://www.soundsurvey.org.uk/index.php/survey/radio_recordings/1930s/1418.

Director of Outside Broadcasts" to the Northern Ireland Regional Director, responding to one of a number letters written to his superiors with ideas for programmes. Wrote Standing to a colleague:

> I believe you suggested at the Regional Programme Directors Meeting that you might use Garner for a darts commentary from Northern Ireland...He has developed an exaggerated idea of his own importance and thinks he should be appointed Director of Darts of the B.B.C! I am trying to bring him to heel...[98]

Obviously, the question of patrician arrogance raises its head given Standing's depiction of a working-class man as a dog. More solidly in an attempt to understand BBC praxis at this time, the notion of Garner having "an exaggerated idea of his own importance" signifies the self-importance of the decision-makers and echoes Colonel Dawnay's opinion in 1935 that senior BBC personnel were far more important in deciding what broadcasting output should be than was public opinion or any external public opinion makers.[99] Standing's comment may, naturally, contain a position on inter-class relationships. Relations with Garner dipped further when Empire Director Pooley wrote to Garner about another difference of opinion:

> From what you said the other day I gather that you are not v happy about our methods of handling darts broadcasts, and in the circumstances, perhaps it would be as well to abandon the idea of the 'Listeners v Champion' Darts Match... I am afraid that we are not likely to change our views, and if you are really dissatisfied with things as they are, we must look for another darts commentator.[100]

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[98] Charles Garner's Contributor File at WAC.
[99] David Chaney, "Audience research and the BBC in the 1930s: a mass medium comes into being," in James Curran et al., eds., *Impacts and Influences, Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Methuen, 1987), 263, quoting, Maurice Gorham, *Sound and Fury* (London: Marshall, 1948), 52.
[100] Garner's Contributor File, Peter Pooley to C. Garner, July 19, 1938.

Documentary evidence in this period consistently shows that BBC staff liked to maintain total control of decision-making, brooking little or no outside interference. In 1933 they had fairly unceremoniously dropped from the cricket roster an exceptionally large sporting luminary in Plum Warner.[101] But by this time Garner's BBC career was flourishing in tandem with the contemporary craze for darts. In 1938 he was interviewed on "the popularity of darts" for the new National programme *At the Black Dog*, which had begun life as an Empire broadcast. Like its Northern Ireland analogue, *The Ulster Inn*, on which he also guested in July of the following year, it was set in an imaginary local pub where listeners were invited to imagine that notable individuals had dropped in for a sociable glass or two. He became Britain's first television darts commentator on 2 April 1938 and made further appearances in October 1938 and January 1939. He appeared twice more on shove ha'penny telecasts in the autumn, though as a player, not a commentator.[102] Thus, the above dismissals of Garner are only explicable in two ways: a personal dislike of Garner or a class antipathy on the part of Standing and Pooley. The absence of any recognition of Garner's popularity with the public by BBC staff in the correspondence should be noted.

Garner's success as a broadcaster continued as he branched out beyond darts. In December 1938 he was part of an entertainment programme *London on Parade*, compèred by Thomas Woodroofe, which aimed to give the audience a picture of a night out enjoyed by the full social range of the city's inhabitants. His role was to commentate "at the big fancy dress ball." Garner's popularity is signified very clearly by *Radio Times* describing him as "the one and only."[103] He was invited a casa Marshall for *At Home to Sportsmen* in May 1939 and was again a guest of *At the Black Dog* in August. Garner's broadcasting career in this period is singular, comparable to MacPherson's but separate in that the latter was not a member of the

[101] Christopher Martin-Jenkins, *Ball by Ball, the History of Cricket Broadcasting* (London: Grafton, 1990), 43.
[102] He was paid a fee of one guinea as a shove ha'penny player; eight guineas as a darts commentator.
[103] *Radio Times*, December 23, 1938, 80.

English working-class. His career is a signifier of a change in the informal rules of entry to the mediator field, though it was mitigated by the rarity of one of the socially dominated entering a field of the socially dominant.

Further Indications of Change: Popular Turn in Programming.

In a letter to the BBC in 1936 just prior to his employment there, Richard Dimbleby illustrated the ongoing problem of social distance between the Corporation's white collar staff and the lower classes,

> "Through the Saturday Magazine and In Town To-night, you already know that the rather uncouth voices of Londoners and countrymen can be recorded or transmitted satisfactorily..."[104]

The use of "uncouth" should probably be read as insulting to working-class people, just as his comment that they can "be recorded or transmitted satisfactorily" was condescending.[105] In late-1933, these "voices" seemed to have been judged worthy of adding to the composite BBC "voice" – or it was felt that they could no longer be excluded. Once accepted on the air, the issue then became a matter of controlling and defining them. The pressure for popular content brought *In Town Tonight* to the air from November 1933 on Saturday evenings. It was enthusiastically received and remained so through to the war, "bringing to the microphone at the same time each week a great medley of characters that either lived in or were visiting London."[106] It was scripted and studio recorded but it did invite in guests from all social classes, specialising in those doing quirky jobs and following eccentric hobbies and

[104] WAC L/131/1, letter from Richard Dimbleby to John Coatman, BBC, May 1936. Pushing hard for a job at the time, Dimbleby was then employed as News Editor of *Advertiser's Weekly*.
[105] Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume One, 1922-3, Serving the Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 123.
[106] Briggs, *Golden Age of Wireless*, 107.

pastimes. It often included sportsmen and women, usually those involved in a current major sporting occasion, mixed in terms of class and nationality. The first sporting personality showcased was working-class boxer Len Harvey, chatting with famous sporting press cartoonist Tom Webster, one from a petty-bourgeois background. The following month Suzanne Lenglen was a guest. In January 1934, the nine sporting items included Webster three times more: talking to star jockey Tom Donohue; boxer Larry Gains and once solo. Lenglen appeared again later, and the bourgeois flavour of the programme was enhanced by George Allison just after being appointed Arsenal manager after the death of Herbert Chapman. Sir Noel Curtis Bennett and A. J. Elvin, owner of the Wembley Empire Pool interviewed "young boxers in training" and C. Cort Woodcock, chairman of the International Table Tennis Association, appeared with champion player Victor Barna. At this stage, the presence of hierarchal power seemed essential to the process. But lawn tennis professionals Bill Tilden and Danny Maskell appeared without a chaperone, showing that the mid-thirties Corporation was capable of breaking free from its attachment to 'Varsity and dominant class-oriented lawn tennis. It also showed that the much-noted anti-Americanism of many senior BBC was not quite monolithic Harnessing Tilden's great box office appeal was a push in a direction away from its reputation for stuffiness. However, Maskell's adoption of dominant class received pronunciation clearly neutralised concerns regarding 'cockney' voices breaching Reithianism.[107] Such guests both reflected the sporting modernism of the age and the capability of individuals schooled in the ideology of amateur superiority of supporting professionalism.[108] By definition the BBC was by now a professional organisation; not a place for the leisured ex-public schoolboy but one for those prepared to embrace the organisation's intensely practical mission.

[107] Maskell was from a petty bourgeois family in Fulham, London, and the seventh of eight children. Dan Maskell, *Oh, I Say!* (London: Willow, 1998), 1-3.
[108] See Fiona Skillen, "Woman and the Sport Fetish: Modernity, Consumerism and Sports Participation in Inter-War Britain," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29, no. 5 (May 2012).

By the war, *ITT* had very firmly embraced populism. Where in 1936, around 50% of sports guests appeared consciously chosen from the dominant class - Gully Nickalls, 'Varsity Boat Race crews, C. B. Fry, Faudel-Phillips, Brooklands racers – in 1939 they are almost entirely absent. "The main idea is to make 'In Town Tonight' 100 per cent topical and up-to-date," producer Mike Meehan told a *Derby Daily Telegraph* reporter in 1938.[109] A staging post in the attempt at popularisation or vulgarisation between the two dates is visible in November 1937 when a show featured "Arsenal goalie and commissionaire, Alec Wilson and Jos Jennings, after a draw with WBA" and "parlour maid Fraulein Luise Horne" who "describes swimming from Southsea to Ryde."[110] In January 1939 "Passers by [were] interviewed in Leicester Square "on 'Their favourite team for the Cup Tie," as were "E. Megan Taylor, World's Champion women skater "now practising for the European Ice Skating Championships next week," "Leslie A. Barker, Linotype operator from an Evening Newspaper" who "Told how football scores are put in the press", and "Aubrey Price who came up to London to see England play Wales at Twickenham."[111] The programme is very notable for bringing spectators to the radio audience for the first time. However, control of the programme was totally in the hands of the educated gentlemen staffers, both at the microphone and behind the scenes, enabling working-class voices to be carefully managed. All items were scripted, destroying the possibility of an organic, spontaneous working-class input.

In Town Tonight was important in altering the class composition of BBC sport but only to a limited extent. It brought working-class voices to the mass audience for the first time *qua* members of the public. But contextualising such popularism is important. On the same first Saturday in May when two rugby league players from Salford and Halifax could be heard in

[109] *Derby Daily Telegraph*, July 2, 1938.
[110] WAC "Programmes as Broadcast" books, November 1937.
[111] WAC "PasBs," January 1939.

the evening on *ITT*, the first county cricket broadcast of the season, as *Radio Times* had previewed it, saw "Howard Marshall, P. G. H. Fender, E. W. Swanton, and Michael Standing, as previously, [sharing] the cricket commentaries among them." These public school-educated individuals illustrated the continuing entrenchment of dominant class mediation of regular sports output. But the programme did represent a shift in BBC thinking under press pressure to refresh itself and its audience with livelier people on air. If Marshall McLuhan is right in arguing that "the medium is the message," programmes like this made the BBC more progressive and less polished whether staff liked the fact or not.[112]

More evidence of a popular turn in BBC output in 1939 can be found in *Lucky Dip* which began in late-January. It was a hotch-potch light entertainment magazine programme with regular items including light music and comedy, the Sexton Blake detective serial, a 'Listener's Corner of Songs', anecdotes and verses contributed by listeners and a sports feature, 'Is that the Rule?' Of the twenty-one recoverable sporting names just six can be categorised as 'dominant class': 28%. This represents a major departure from traditional radio sport. The tone and structure of *Lucky Dip* was geared to a mass audience. The weekly inclusion of a famous or more exclusively notable sports guest is evidence of this. Thus, the class composition of guests was required to be more democratic. A second group of six on the programme can be identified as petty bourgeois or bourgeois by income and status despite their having started life in working-class families. They include Danny Maskell, professional snooker and billiard player Joe Davis, cricketing all-rounder M. S. "Stan" Nichols, recently re-called to the test team at 39, cricketing great Patsy Hendren, now public school coach, and young golfers J. A. Cox and Alf Padgham. The latter was an agricultural labourer, as was his

[112] See Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message," *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964), Chapter One, https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/mcluhan.mediummessage.pdf.

father before him; both later became golf professionals. Cox was also the son of an agricultural labourer.[113]

The following *Lucky Dip* sportsmen were exceptionally unlikely to have emanated from dominant class fractions: Slough-born Vic Woodley, England's goalkeeper in 1939; Jack Parker, Birmingham speedway rider, widely regarded to have been one of the greatest in the sport's history;[114] Arthur Atkinson, another speedway racer, captain of the West Ham Hammers, born in the industrial town of Nelson and Arthur Danahar, a 20 year-old lightweight boxer about to fight for the British lightweight title (and lose), "the Irish guardsman" of Bethnal Green.[115] The remaining group were of foreign birth. One, Johnny Hoskins, was a New Zealand-born entrepreneur who had successfully brought the sport of dirt-track racing, known as "speedway" to Britain. Steve Greatorex was one of his riders, captain of the New Cross team. He and his family had fled the Bolshevik revolution, suggesting class-origin well-above proletarian. Jimmy Foster was a Scottish-born Canadian ice hockey player who represented Britain at the 1936 Olympics. He migrated to England in 1935 to play the game in the newly-formed league. His father was a "foreman blacksmith."[116] Californian Alice Marble won Wimbledon in 1939 and Jay Shields was an athlete with the Harvard-Yale team who might more reasonably be included in the dominant class group. While the programme created openings for fifteen people from the lower classes on the air, a study of 1939 also shows that the growth in cricket transmissions to 144 simply expanded

[113] 1891 and 1911Census returns for both men.
[114] Simon Lewis, "Jack Parker – Legend," *The Motor Sport Fanatic* (2004), website, http://www.motorsport-fanatic.co.uk/speedway-parker.htm.
[115] "Arthur Danahar, British Boxer, 1938," Getty Images photograph, https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/arthur-danahar-british-boxer-1938-born-in-bethnal-green-news-photo/464000861.
[116] Martin Harris (additional material by David Gordon), "Jimmy Foster," Ice hockey Hall of Fame, Ice Hockey Journalists UK website, August 1998/2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20080511232954/http://www.ihjuk.co.uk/hall_of_fame/foster.htm.

opportunities at the microphone for the ex-public schoolboy cohort. Only when the whole picture for a given year is considered can conclusions be drawn.

The last pre-war innovation in BBC sports radio came in April 1939. The programme *At Home to Sportsmen* was sport's contribution to a generally more informal BBC tone as it sought to quell the noise of the critics. "Informality is behind a new series of sporting talks to be inaugurated on 12 April," announced one newspaper.[117] "Discussions by representatives of differing kinds of sport should result in a lively meeting with freshness of view" continued the article, or perhaps BBC press release. It went on, "Although sporting talks and discussions in the past have been of great interest and fulfilled a great demand, it is felt that new ideas should be explored." The new initiative was not just that the "talks" – actually programmes of controlled interviews - would take place at the home of Howard Marshall, "host to the party," but that discussions would be "general and free of script restrictions." Six shows aired but listings only revealed guests in four of them. They had a strong topical content, most guest invitations coinciding with their involvement in an event.

The names of seventeen of around twenty-six guests are known. Bernard Darwin, Plum Warner, Harold Abrahams, J. H. Gibbons and Sir Malcolm Campbell formed the cohort of ex-Varsity men. Frank Coles, sports editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, can almost be assumed to have attended a public school. Air racer Alex Henshaw was privately educated as in all probability was G. P. Hughes, an ex-Davis Cup lawn tennis player now an economist. Grammar school educated Stanley Rous, secretary of the Football Association, esteemed referee and ex-state trained PE schoolmaster could by 1939 easily be sociologically classified as a member of the dominant class. He certainly had cultural markers such as an RP accent in 1966 and almost certainly displayed this class marker in the 1930s.

[117] *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, April 11, 1939.

Seven guests had working-class or petty-bourgeois roots: Willie Smith and Barry Dalby (discussed above); Len Harvey, the most broadcast boxer between the wars (in eleven fights); champion jockey Freddy Fox, rugby player Jim Brough, cyclist Syd Cozens and bowls champion J. G. Carruthers. Cozens had been a brilliant 1920s amateur cyclist and 1928 Olympian and was now a Six-Day Event specialist professional.[118] His father was a "fitter", later postman and at the outbreak of war in 1939 a "post-office cleaner," his grandparents a stone and marble mason, ironmonger and domestic coachman. Fox's father had been a bricklayer's labourer, a groom, a butcher's general servant and agricultural labourer, his mother a dressmaker. By 1899, with both parents dead by the age of 12, at 14 he lived with his brother, a butcher's errand boy. By the age of 27 he was a famous jockey joining the Pimlico freemasons.[119] Jim Brough, a much celebrated dual-code England rugby international – as a league player he captained Leeds, Yorkshire and England, was actually the son of a bicycle repairer, his brother was an apprentice plumber. By 1939 he had left professional rugby to be a works manager in South Africa. In a 1937 newspaper article, "Brough Deplores Class Distinction," he argued for League players to be able to return to playing Union.[120] Upwardly mobile, trained in the later-1930s for a career in works management in Leeds, his invitation by Marshall appears to have been on the basis of his greatness in a sport far from favoured by London BBC staff. J. G. Carruthers was the EBA bowling champion and by 1939 he had been an England international for thirty-four years. A Dumfriesian whose father was listed as "farmer" in the 1891 census returns, at 27 he was a law clerk.[121] He moved to London to "further his commercial career" – in fact he was a meat salesman, boarding in

[118] *Six Day Cycle Race*, "1939 Pen Portraits," accessed June 11, 2018, http://sixday.org.uk/html/1939_riders.html.
[119] 1881, 1891 and 1921 Census returns.
[120] *Western Mail*, April 2, 1937.
[121] 1891 Census returns.

Hornsey - and joined a bowling club in Muswell Hill.[122] By 1939, however, he was a member of the professional classes, a produce importer agent, which may help to explain his acceptability to Marshall and the BBC.[123]

At Home to Sportsmen also represented a departure from sports programming norms. It forms part of a late-thirties pattern in a tonal shift from dominant class seriousness towards mass audience popularity. However, this particular programme was almost certainly mitigated by Marshall's tone in talking to his lower-class cohort of guests but in the absence of transcripts or recordings, definitive judgement is not possible. Their inclusion conforms to a developing principle which broke with Reith's "social standing" ethos: increasingly now, the inadequate symbolic capital social class of the mediator could be transcended by their sporting brilliance.

Though *At Home*'s concession to radio democratisation was the informality of its setting, the other programmes featured above formed part of a 1930s trend to provide more entertainment output for a mass audience.[124] A significant increase in 'Variety' entertainment made working-class artists such as Gracie Fields, George Formby, Robb Wilton and Arthur Askey household names.[125] Less famously, programmes such as *Monday Night at Seven* and *The Ulster Inn* typified the growing use of the magazine format and in January 1938, the 'Bee' programme format arrived, at first concentrating on spelling but broadening into a programme type now known as the game show. Over thirty such shows were aired during

[122] 1911 Census returns and *Middlesex Bowling Club Centenary booklet* (2011), http://www.middlesexcba.co.uk/PDA/History.pdf.
[123] J. G. Carruthers left £69, 257 in probate upon his death in 1958, emphasising his upward social trajectory.
[124] Scannell & Cardiff, *Social History of Broadcasting*, 266.
[125] The career of Tommy Handley, soon to become a huge "star" of the war years through the programme *It's That Man Again* (*ITMA*), had been a famous broadcast entertainer in the 1920s but his career flagged somewhat until July 1939 when the first wartime *ITMA* was aired. It was not until October 10, its eighth show, that *ITMA* finally found the format that took its level of popularity to great heights.

that year.[126] *In Town Tonight* particularly signalled a realisation among executive staff that if the BBC was to maintain credibility as a broadcaster for the whole nation it could no longer keep working-class and petty-bourgeois individuals off the air. Space was therefore created for lower-class mediators. This concession saw more invitations being sent out to lower-class sporting individuals. However, aside from the outliers discussed above, they were not asked to make eye-witness reports, to commentate or to give talks. Those heard were for the most part guest 'sporting heroes', expert performers making short appearances in mainstream entertainment programmes, a philosophy which dominated *At Home to Sportsmen*. Only rarely were they used to demonstrate and communicate their expertise in depth.

Across all programme types, the last four years of peace were those of a huge increase in sports output (see Table 1.). In 1938, 2812 sports items (including regular sports bulletins but excluding news related content) were broadcast compared with 690 in 1932 and 1,495 in 1936. But rather than benefiting working–class sports and pastimes, this output expansion saw those closely associated with the dominant class rose along with those which had strong lower-class associations. Soccer, horse racing and boxing were the chief beneficiaries where, incidentally, dominant class interest was also strong. Therefore, more output devoted to these sports benefitted all classes. A conspicuous increase in leisure programming also took place – an innovation - covering hiking, angling and cycling. This became a feature of most regional centres in this period. The frequency of sport in nightly news bulletins increased very significantly too. The figure for 1938 – 4,817 – represents a 35% increase on that for 1937.[127]

During this expansion it was not the new, mostly professional sports such as ice hockey, speedway, snooker, darts, water polo and table tennis only which benefitted (see Table 2.).

[126] Date culled from BBC Genome project, https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/search/680/20?order=asc&q=Bee#search, 35.
[127] WAC Digital Library, News Index, 1937-1939.

All types of sports and leisure increased in extent, from sheep dog trials and highland games to chess, pub games and camping. Dominant class sports such as rifle shooting, mountaineering, gliding, sailing, fencing, air racing, equestrianism and polo, badminton, bridge, the Henley Regatta, lacrosse, point-to-pointing and squash all enjoyed increased or new exposure. Even rackets, the Eton Wall Game, and croquet were broadcast, if only in tiny amounts.

Rugby league, the sport of the industrial working class in the north of England, also enjoyed greater frequency of appearance in this period, expanding from just six items of output in 1932 exclusively on the northern regional station bar the annual Wembley Challenge Cup final, to thirty-three in 1937, its peak year. It produced the highest number of commentators of any individual sport in the 1930s as the Northern region appeared to favour those with local knowledge above building a small team of regulars. However, Lance Todd and Hubert Bateman stand out in the later-thirties as the most used. Todd was a New Zealander who progressed to administrator at Salford, while Bateman, according to *Radio Times*, was prominent in soccer as well as rugby league as referee and an administrator and apparently lectured "on subjects that include psychology and sociology."[128] Both possessed the symbolic capital of the authority figure so typical still of BBC praxis.

Significantly, 'Varsity contests increased in number from three items per annum between 1931 and 1934 to eight in 1937-38. Dominant class sports required people from the same class to mediate them. Commentating newcomers such as Glendenning, Aiden Crawley, E. W. Swanton, Michael Standing, Richard North, G. Phipps-Hornby and H. F. Faudel-Phillips arguably cancelled out the arrival of Garner, Dalby, Smith and MacPherson, just as the sports

[128] *Radio Times*, October 22, 1937, 94.

Table 1: Aggregate Radio Sports Output by Year and Type, 1923-39

Year	Core Radio Sport Output	Sports Bulletins	Sport in News	Total Sports Radio Output
1923	182			182
1924	420			420
1925	686			686
1926	734			734
1927	927	642		1569
1928	709	209		919
1929	447	430		877
1930	360	443		803
1931	312	342		654
1932	306	384		690
1933	381	343		724
1934	530	280	11	821
1935	855	292	93	1240
1936	1072	369	54	1495
1937	1268	763	3359	5390
1938	2124	688	4817	7629
1939	1515	479	2380	4374
Total	12570	5664	10714	28948

Source: *Radio Times* and *The Times* daily listings, and BBC 'Programmes as Broadcast' books.

of the elite cancelled out the new arrivals. The latter group of commentators were almost completely excluded from the National station, indicating the inferior status of their sports in the eyes of programme builders. The disparity is striking. Between 1936 and 1939, 224 items

were broadcast in total across these six sports; just sixteen of them appeared on the National station, three of these in wartime - all darts – a gesture towards national unity. Such broadcasts were handled almost exclusively by MacPherson, Smith and Garner. An analysis of the National station sports mediator cohorts of 1936 and 1939 reveals powerful continuity. For 1936, 79% are categorizable as dominant class – seventy-six of the ninety-eight recoverable in terms of information supplied in *Radio Times* and daily programme listings. The proportion rises to 84% if the six foreign mediators are excluded. Because the data is un-weighted – most dominant class commentators were used on multiple occasions – the figure of 79% underestimates the proportion of time mediators from that class were heard on air. A weighted method of quantification would show that the audibility of lower-class voices on National radio was much less than is suggested by the raw data. A study of 1939's mediator roster on the same station shows that the proportion of dominant class mediators was unaltered: 79%. Only the inclusion of sport in variety entertainment and *At Home to Sportsmen* altered the balance of dominant-to-non-dominant individuals and gave radio sport a more socially inclusive appearance in the last years of the decade.

Other factors need to be taken into account to produce a more rounded view of the subject. Firstly, the common practice of corrected speech in a socially upward direction has to be taken into consideration. Individuals who had risen to positions of authority in their sport – T. A. Waterhouse (angling) and James Hartley (bowls) for example, or one such as world champion professional sculler Ernest Barry, who was a Royal Waterman and Royal Barge Master – lessened the impact of lower-class mediators on the tone and character of the BBC; they did not stand as representatives of social classes which possessed a distinct and different habitus. Secondly, older sportsmen and women conveyed an authority which compensated for the lack of an authentic privileged class accent. Thus, the appearance of a non-dominant class member on the radio may have meant little in class terms, aside from Reithian practice

Table 2: Top 30 Most Broadcast Sports. 1923-39 (not including 'sport in news')

Position	Sport or Leisure Activity	No. of Broadcasts
1.	Association football	2043
2.	Cricket	1221
3.	Rugby union	891
4.	Lawn tennis	584
5.	PT/Fitness	445
6.	Angling	374
7.	Hiking/Walking/Rambling	364
8.	Boxing	324
9.	Golf	334
10.	Racing	288
11.	Motor racing	249
12.	Rugby league	242
13.	Sailing/Yachting	231
14.	Athletics	230
15.	Cycling (leisure)	220
16.	Mountaineering/Climbing	197
17.	Hockey	183
18.	Motor cycling	168
19.	Chess	120
20.	Field sports	119
21.	Rowing	117
22.	Camping	107
23.	Bridge	94
24.	Agricultural shows	91
25.	Swimming (competition)	80
26.	Bowls	79
27.	Cycling (competition)	77
28.	Swimming (leisure)	73
29.	Air racing	64
30.	Speedway	59
(31. Ice hockey 57)		

Source: authors research using Radio Times *and* The Times daily programmes listings and BBC WAC 'Programmes as Broadcast' log books.

utilising lower-class men and women to bolster the existing social order at a time of severe social division. Thirdly, the use of lower-class star performers was also mitigated by the tendency of the super-talented to transcend their class status, not least because of the financial the dominant class.[129] Fourthly, BBC archive data, only available for 1938 and 1939, shows that the vast majority of 'Topical Talks' on sports, essentially news reports, were predominantly on dominant class sports and given almost exclusively by BBC members of staff. Fifthly, daily short sports reports accompanying news bulletins (three per day) also focussed primarily on middle and upper middle-class interests and were announced by dominant class individuals. Little effort was by the Corporation to respond to audience demand – another feature of Reithianism – not canvassing its audience until 1936. Little was revealed in a September 1938 survey with regard to sport, the Outside Broadcasting section of the subsequent report merely stating that, "There were a no. of requests, mainly from working-class men, for more boxing commentaries."[130]

To gain a complete picture of radio sport in the late-1930s is therefore difficult. It is arguably well-described, however, as 'continuity Reithianism' and 'managed populism.' Reithianism did not change in its essence; but as elements in British society demanded modernism in the form of more popular entertainment and coverage of popular sport, radio sport was affected by Reith allowing the terrain to shift to some extent. However, there is no evidence in the 1930s that Reith's conservative credo, at the centre of which was a strong belief in the existing political and social order, changed. Neither had time weakened his belief in broadcasting's power to preserve it. The elaborate broadcasting of the 1937 Coronation confirms this.[131] And while British life was re-constituted in the 1930s by a range of

[129] Mike Huggins and Jack Williams, *Sport and the English* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), Chapter Three.
[130] WAC "Winter Listening Habits – A Report on the First Random Sample Scheme January 1938 Part 1," Listener Research Section, Pub Relations Division, BBC 1 September, 1938.
[131] John Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), 279-82.

economic, social and political changes, developments and continuities, the structured ideology of the BBC remained unaltered. As one left-wing contemporary averred, the first Governors were from the privileged class and by 1938, of 29 members of the BBC Council, twenty were titled and only three could be said in any way to be able to represent the working class.[132] Populism constituted a demand for change to which he was only prepared to make small concessions. Certainly the sporting menu was more varied by 1939, reflecting widening leisure interests up, down and across the isles.[133] Regional sport boomed and led the way in terms of innovation, founding Saturday evening magazine programming and featuring the 'new' sports mentioned above. But the national station was still the bastion of the sports that had dominated sports output during the previous decade and of the ex-public schoolboys and girls who presented them to the public. Balancing continuity against change is something of a wrestling match, a contest made harder and more attritional by the complete absence of data revealing how many listened to regional radio as opposed to wireless on the National station.

From Reith to Ogilvie; From Peace to War

The change at Director-General level from John Reith to Sir Frederick Ogilvie (Clifton and Balliol, Oxford) ensured that at the highest level the Corporation remained in the hands of the public school-'Varsity educated elite. A much more passive practitioner than Reith, there is no evidence that the changes that moved the BBC in a more populist direction in the last year or so of peace were his doing. Other matters pressed him: grasping the workings of the organisation and the practice of broadcasting; the likely arrival of a war with Nazi Germany and the early development of the television service.[134] So the chasm of interest and shared

[132] George Audit, *The BBC Exposed* (London: Left Review, 1937), 17.
[133] Huggins, "Quantifying leisure trends," 1.
[134] For the transition from Reith to Ogilvie see Briggs, *Golden Age***,** Chapter Six. Appropriately, Ogilvie was educated at Clifton College and Balliol, Oxford.

experience between a dominant class-run BBC and the nation's working class, identified by Briggs and others, remained.

When war began broadcasting temporarily ceased and on its return radio sport was slow to be revived. De Lotbinière left to take control of Western broadcasting, to be replaced by his class equal, Michael Standing, who remained in post until 1945. When it restarted, the pattern of sports programme choices changed and with it the balance between dominant and non-dominant class mediators. Of the forty broadcasts of the last months of 1939 where they can be identified by name, only fifty per cent were from the dominant class. Allison, Sharpe and Brownie Carslake, who according to one source was "a stylish dresser, had impeccable manners and an ability to mix easily with any level of society" may have displayed a set of cultural markers eliding rather than jarring with BBC cultural norms.[135] This we know Allison also did with success. Thirdly, the high proportion of popular sports chosen for broadcast – boxing, racing and darts – meant there was a demand for the services of Dalby, race reader Wilfred Taylor and Garner. Finally, the autumn reduced the number of elite sporting events: there was no cricket, athletics, golf or lawn tennis to cover and no social occasion horse races. But even so, a four month period of BBC radio sport not dominated by gentlemen mediators is a one worth registering. To what extent this represented a significant new marker in the populist turn in late-1930s output it is not possible to say without studying sports output during the war years and beyond. This would be a step beyond the scope of this research project.

Conclusion

[135] Carslake online biography at Jockeypedia 3, accessed May 21, 2019, https://sites.google.com/site/carverwilliamjockey/carslake-bernard.

The changing nature of BBC radio and its sport in the 1930s supports Bourdieu's conceptualization of a field is "as a space of potential and active forces" and that "the field is also *a field of struggles*, aimed at preserving or transforming the configuration of these forces."[136] This chapter has shown BBC staff, from Reith down, preserved the essential nature of the organisation that Reith established in its early days, one which established dominant class hegemony over British broadcasting. Based on an implacable belief in using radio as a raising agent of taste and manners, whether in advocating the use of 'correct' speech, with a phalanx of trained announcers as a spearhead, or presenting Ibsen, Delius and talks on the League of Nations, by 1939 the BBC was a national colossus. The wireless was a revolutionary instrument where even Reith accepted from the start the additional exigency of entertaining the listener.[137] If the new medium was not to become a highbrow laager suitable only for ageing clergymen, retired majors and maiden aunts, output had to contain elements of the popular. The expanding audience and the eager, critical press pressurised Reith and his programme builders ensuring that the BBC as a field would increasingly become a site of struggle. This led to an unmistakeable popularisation of output. Sport was bound up in this. The British inter-war period ended with either continuity or change, depending on one's perspective: a return to the past through another war with Germany, the beginning of a transformation of social attitudes *en masse* which culminated in the defeat of the successful war leader, Churchill. There is almost a feeling of falseness in dwelling on the outcome of the struggle for control of sports mediator selection at the BBC in the rush of events.

[136] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 101.
[137] Reith, *Broadcasting over Britain* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), 17-18.

Concluding Chapter

> "This voice, silky, persuasive, emerging restlessly from a mechanical instrument, awakened and silenced, swelling and waning, to the adjustment of a switch, ushering in each new year, bidding farewell to each old one, announcing a King's demise and a Government's fall, a new King's enthronement and a new Government's formation, presenting happenings great and small to its immense audience – may it not be regarded as, to use Coriolanus's expression, 'the tongue of the common mouth'?" M. Muggeridge.[1]

> "By investment I mean the propensity to act that is born of the relation between a field and a system of dispositions adjusted to the game it proposes, a sense of the game and of its stakes that implies at once an *inclination* and *ability* to play the game, both of which are socially and historically constituted rather than universally given." P. Bourdieu.[2]

Thesis Overview – Its Contribution to the Archive

The central subject matter of this thesis is constructed principally at the meeting point of three objects: the history of the BBC 1922-39, the history of sport and the sociology of social class. There were rich seams of social history for this thesis to mine, most of them previously unexplored by scholars. Although the BBC in the time of Reith has been constantly described in terms such as elitist, hierarchical and paternalistic, and its radio sport described by historians such as Huggins and Haynes in similar terms, a thorough investigation of the composition and character of radio sport in this period from the perspective of class is long overdue. The aim of the research project was to try to reach a more profound and also a more refined and nuanced understanding of the organisation and its product.

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[1] Malcolm Muggeridge, *The Thirties, 1930-40 in Great Britain* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1940), 43.
[2] Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Polity, 1992), 118.

This meticulous study fills an archival gap by carrying out the first in-depth investigation into the relationship between BBC radio sport 1922-39 and social class. It is also the first study of the subject which uses social theory in tandem with the skills of the orthodox historian to try to understand the past. Here the methodology of Pierre Bourdieu, whose sociology has been used exclusively, has been enormously influential, not least his foundational belief that his work should try to create a "realistic vision of the social world,"[3] concentrating on the "nitty-gritty" of everyday life.[4] These intentions and the clear and direct language with which Bourdieu expressed them both guided and inspired this piece of research. In finding via empirical analysis that the arena of British class relations was the overwhelmingly important driver of sports output mediator selection, a clearer understanding of the BBC in this period is now available. As a by-product of that investigation it was found that John Reith, the day-to-day chief executive office of the BBC from the founding of the BBCo in late-1922 through to June 1938, devised a system of recruitment for all non-menial and craft-technical positions based on social class. This system remained in place for the entire pre-Second World War period of the BBC's history and was a function of both social developments in Britain during the previous ninety years and the very recent changes wrought by the Great War. These findings represent an additional and highly significant closing of archival gaps.

Methodology Reviewed

The key questions which shaped the investigations into the BBC and class were answered directly and to a very large extent successfully. This was achieved in several stages. Reith being at the centre of the between-wars historiography, the first stage was to explore the narrative of Reith's appointment as first general manager. But as Chapter One shows, this could not be separated from a social transformation in Britain which took place in the

[3] Ibid., 155.
[4] Ibid., 198.

Victorian and Edwardian periods. In particular, attention was focused on the continuing decline in the power of the landed classes and the rise of the industrial, commercial and professional fractions of the bourgeoisie at their expense. By the late-nineteenth century, the sons and grandsons of the captains of industry and commerce of the Industrial Revolution had been sent in their hundreds to the public schools to receive an aristocratic education where they absorbed major strands of upper-class habitus and accrued copious amounts of symbolic capital.

The term, "bourgeoisie" is used throughout this thesis because of its superior utility compared with its alternative, "middle class." This is because of the latter term's imprecise character when de-coding which groups, sectors or sub-classes are being delineated by those scholars who use the term. The British "middle classes" are usually visualized as a unitary class comprising medium to large shopkeepers and low-wage office clerks at the lower end in terms of economic prosperity, the owners of large industrial plant and highly remunerated lawyers at the higher end. The adapting of Bourdieu's theory of the field where power is depicted as being possessed and wielded by a "dominant" class over a "dominated" class requires the deployment of both terms in this thesis, their precise use depending on the relevant context: "dominant class" when Bourdieu's conceptual modeling is used; "bourgeoisie" and "bourgeois (power)" generally when it is not. Those effectively disempowered by the hegemonic power of the bourgeoisie Bourdieu described as a "dominated" class usually consisting of the "petty bourgeoisie" and the "*classes populaires"* horizontally positioned below them in the class pyramid. Sometimes the use of both was effective in adding meaning to the term, "dominant class". According to Bourdieu's writing such classes consisted of individuals who across various academic disciplines are normally referred to as belonging to certain classes – "working class". "middle class", "upper middle

class" and so on. In explicating the founding of the BBC by two successive British governments - Lloyd George Coalition at its end and the first post-war Conservative and Unionist party administration at its beginning - it is arguably more accurate to describe Reith and the directors of the large wireless manufacturers as members of a dynamic bourgeoisie, given that the term expresses the degree of wealth, power or influence possessed by those individuals. Given Reith's decision to engage members of his own class to monopolize non-menial and artisanal positions in the company (and later in the Corporation), a system also described and explicated in Chapter One, it seems eminently rational to describe the BBC as a bourgeois construct representing bourgeois power in the state's political, industrial and media fields. The investigation into Reith's general recruitment policies looking for evidence of the influence of class relations formed the second stage of the meta-inquiry of the study.

In attempting to find the most effective use of terminology, the use of Bourdieu's field theory seems to convert "bourgeois power" into "dominant class power". But Bourdieu was happy to use both modes of diction in his writing and speaking. So, where Chapters Two and Four detail the Reithian methodology of sports mediator invitation and selection - stage three of the research process - they explain that Reith's phalanx of dominant class staff, with their hordes of symbolic capital, dominated the positions of executive action. Within the News, Outside Broadcasting and Talks Departments, these roles included being tasked with organizing sports output. In doing this the ideal was to select members of their own class to speak to the radio audience. These chapters explained that this was necessitated by Reith, suffering or enjoying a form of monomania as BBC executive chief, striving to create a "first class" organisation offering "everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement" the country could offer.[5] In this pre-existing ideological model which Reith internalized then utilized, only the "educated" classes – those

[5] John Reith, *Broadcast over Britain* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), 34.

who had passed through the educational institutions of the social elite - were thought qualified to inhabit positions of authority in the field of BBC broadcasting. With a force Bourdieu conceptualized as "symbolic violence", those who did not possess the required educational capital, a form which immediately converted into social and cultural capital, useable as currency in any field, were almost totally excluded from the fields that this thesis is concerned with: those with programme making agency and those who represented the institution at the microphone of the sports product.

A case study chapter – stage four - was placed between chapters Two and Four and which sought to explore and explain that both Reith's recruitment systems and the ideologies and philosophies which underpinned and energized them remained in place until war time, only marginally being adapted to popular pressure after 1932. The subject of the case study was the first sports live broadcast with running commentary which took place at Twickenham on Saturday, 15 January 1927. This academic exercise was highly effective in illustrating in close-up the prevailing Reithian ideologies of class. A dominant class staffer, Lance Sieveking, was given the job of organizing – in radio parlance, "producing" – the broadcast in all its non-engineering facets. He chose an appropriate class member, Teddy Wakelam, to be the BBC's first narrator of the action, at an essentially dominant class sports event. So far, so Reithian. However, the strength of the case study showed itself in shining light on factual details of the broadcasting event's construction which complicated an apparently straightforward exercise in meaning-derivation. Firstly, it might easily *not* have been Wakelam who was chosen to describe the match. Secondly, the choice of Wakelam's on air assistant was a man from a working-class background. Thirdly, the first live sports broadcast could quite easily have been a soccer cup-tie – soccer, the supposedly working-class game – a week later. Fourthly, a number of press articles on Wakelam's narration described it as

"popular", therefore a product democratic in character. The chapter was completed by an analysis of the broadcasting event as a demonstration of the influence of gentlemanly amateurism, a dominant class philosophical-ideological theory of sport, shared and espoused by the educated middle classes and members of the aristocracy, taught with great conviction at the public and lesser private and most grammar schools. This exercise culminated in the judgement that the organisation and execution of the England versus Wales broadcast should be decoded as a product showcasing amateurism, amateurishness, professionalism and artistry in different measures. It concluded that a rigorous empirical study of the making of the event could not produce an absolutely decisive answer to questions of class meaning. The case study chapter also concluded that Bourdieu would not have had difficulty in seeing the watershed broadcasting event as anything other than an act of dominant class power. The class background of the major actors in this particular game in the field – Sieveking, Reith, Cock and Wakelam, perhaps Roger Eckersley too - would for him have decided the issue. In these four stages, then, was the investigation into the inter-war BBC, sport and social class using the social physics of Pierre Bourdieu carried out.

The thesis produces a series of discoveries which challenges pre-existing suppositions concerning class prejudice at the BBC. It shows that a clearly defined Reithian belief system drove recruitment. The perhaps more significant finding was that the same system of class-typical but idiosyncratic thought, in some respects rational, in others emotional and prejudiced, drove sports mediator recruitment. Bourdieu's theory of habitus – a set of dispositions, attitudes, opinions and codes of behaviour – illuminated the significance of this: tens of millions of British people were constantly in contact with the voice of the BBC which consisted of the sound, the diction and to some degree the character of the British dominant class of the 'educated'. It requires saying in conclusion that all this was not inevitable. The

history of the BBC and BBC radio sport between the wars could have been different. Bourdieu may have disagreed, saying that given the extent of bourgeois power in 1922, a different outcome was not possible. That may or not be so.

These successes were achieved by effectively utilizing sources relevant to the study. The BBC's repository of written and archives revealed much about BBC staff's social origins and to a lesser extent how their class attachment directed or influenced their work in shaping broadcasting strategies and making the actual broadcasts. A thorough excavation of ex-staffer memoirs were of enormous value, producing the same effective results. They frequently disclosed the class origins of their authors, their colleagues and the class-bound nature of many institutional working practices, particularly Reith and Carpendale's interview methodology. *Radio Times*, the official BBC weekly magazine, mouthpiece and megaphone was also a profoundly helpful source, proving to be an effulgent repository of the BBC's belief systems over the designated eighteen year period. Its programme notes played a vital role in disclosing sports mediator biographies which in turn often revealed their class attachment. And in advertising the BBC's daily programme output across all its stations, along with *The Times*'s daily listings, it painted a richly textured and coloured picture of the institution's character and nature by acting as an archive of its output with accompanying commentary. As stated earlier, what "made" the BBC the institution or social object was ultimately the programme content it offered its audience. To this must be added the point that the type of individual the administrators and more hands-on programme builders selected, invited or chose to bring to the microphone contributed almost as much to its intrinsic, active nature. Finally, Catherine's Murphy's study of women at the BBC during the same period under the microscope here was invaluable in showing in forensic detail the extent to which women were able to traverse the difficulties of entry to the field and once playing, the ways

in which their career progress was bounded by the informal rules of an essentially male-orientated institution. In terms of social class, her "Women at Work at the BBC: 1922-39" illustrated that the Reithian recruitment process regarding women in white collar positions privileged the privately and Oxbridge educated above other categories of prospective employees.[6] The scrutinisation of these sources functioned to enable the study to produce a number of valid evaluations and analyses of the Reithian BBC in the service of precise lines of inquiry which extend and deepen our understanding not only of the "true nature" of BBC radio sport in this period but the BBC more widely.

Thesis Significance and Importance

The use of Bourdieusian sociology to examine and explore the inter-war BBC recruitment of staff and sports mediators allows a much wider investigation of class and status at the BBC than other historians have achieved hitherto. This has brought a multi-dimensional approach to the in-depth analysis of the forces and motives which drove the decision-making of policy makers and programme builders. This can be seen in Chapter One where Reith's guiding principles for the building of a national broadcasting monopoly organisation were set out for the first time in 1924. Furthermore, the use of Bourdieusian thought has produced answers to vital questions surrounding the true nature and character of the BBC using different epistemological rationality and logic. This unique approach has enabled the presentation of new perspectives which go beyond the scope of the existing historiography.

Firstly, the multi-disciplinary approach taken here takes the scholar beyond assertions and conclusions regarding the class nature of the institution of previous academic researchers which suffer from their limited nature. There are good reasons for this. By no means all

[6] Catherine Murphy, "'On an Equal Footing with Men?' Women and Work at the BBC, 1923-1939" (Goldsmiths College, University of London, PhD diss., 2011), 22, 53, 97-9, 203-4.

scholars are of the belief that using social class as an analytical approach is necessary or helpful, but as demonstrated here, it can produce a number of fresh findings and open new debates which develop the existing understanding of the BBCo's foundation, the employment of Reith and, concomitantly, the organisation's founding principles which, as this thesis shows, quickly became embedded and which proved to be extremely durable. Most scholars of the early BBC take other approaches and do so for the most honourable of reasons. But in doing so at least some may be said to be class blind. Given the fact that contemporaries of 1920s and 1930s Britain were convinced of the society being drenched in class bias and division – as evidenced by Orwell and Tawney to analyze the early BBC without taking this into account would be to fatally narrow the researcher's vision. What this study shows is that an analytical approach which closely examines class relations produces explanations for the actions of key social actors such as Noble, Reith, Sieveking and de Lotbinière without which the BBC of this period cannot be fully understood. As Bourdieu put it so succinctly, "the real is the relational."[7] Chapter One demonstrates that Reith's determination to constantly and virtually exclusively fill posts and new positions with ex-public schoolboys created a field where educational capital became the entry ticket. This re-framing of the operational procedures of power at the institution allows us to apprehend the BBC as a social entity where not only a privileged small minority of the population were allowed into the game - as stated in Chapter Four (p. 207), only 3-5% of the British people spoke with the dominant class habitus strand of received pronunciation - but one where the mass of the population was excluded from it.

Another significance of the study is its conversion of the notion that the inter-war BBC's processes and results – its policies and strategies leading to output and mediator decisions –

[7] Bourdieu & Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 97. This quotation is also used in Chapter One of the thesis, 100.

were socially driven, to a hypothesis which is very hard to destabilise. The extent to which this was the case can only be highlighted using the type of cross-disciplinary approach deployed here. The study's assertion that an increasingly bourgeoisie-controlled British polity led directly to a BBC resolutely espousing bourgeois values is important because it takes our understanding of the forces which shaped the institution much further than hitherto. The uncovering of a Reithian system of recruitment of BBC staff which extended outwards into choice of sports mediators both underlines and qualifies the conceptualization of the institution as a bourgeois product in this chapter, the excavations into mediator class in Chapters Two and Four and in the case study in Chapter Three. The existing literature on this subject merely acknowledges the fact that almost all BBC staff and many of their sports mediators were public school and 'Varsity products. This thesis goes much further by demonstrating that the sons (and daughters) of the industrial, commercial and professional classes heavily colonized these institutions as consequence of social change; this connects the early BBC to much wider historical processes. It demonstrates that suffused with Reith's model of how a national broadcaster might advance the creation of an ideal British society at a time of much uncertainty, the BBC consolidated Britain's unique type of bourgeois power in the state. This was typified by a refusal of Reith to accept any form of commitment to the transparency and accountability associated with democratic theory. In this sense – and there were others - the inter-war BBC was not an addition to the structural democracy of the state. This may have been Reithian – he resented any and every form of interference even from the institution's own Board of Governors – rather than a primarily structural feature, but it spoke of a wider resentment to and recoiling from scrutiny, especially from below, in the BBC's case, from the press or the letter-writing audience.

The investigations in this thesis into the class background of the staff revealed that the BBC became a colossus not of middle-class power but of the power of the bourgeoisie via members of the commercial, industrial, professional, clerical, military and artistic fractions of an organically shifting dominant class. Bourdieu's theory of dominant classes is at its most essential here, allowing the thesis to firmly argue that the BBC helped to re-consolidate the power of a dominant class small in number but rich in power. These historical developments occurred at a time of huge social, political and economic uncertainty for the nation state as a whole and the socially privileged perhaps more than other class groupings. There is no doubt that between the wars that through its class-oriented ideologically created practices the BBC took on the form of a barrier to the threat to the dominant social elite from the rise of the forces of labour in the shape of the Labour party, the Trades Union movement and a new mass electorate. While, as for example Keith Middlemas has shown, elite organisations made accommodations with these challenges, Reith refused to appease them in the 1920s and adjusted strategy and policy only slightly in the following decade. This thesis provides crucial new evidence here by outlining three allowances: one made to commentators Garner, Dalby and MacPherson; a second in the form of the exposure of a number of popular 'new' sports in the 1930s, and a third in the form of the regular inclusion of lower-class sportsmen and women in a radio form which represented another innovation of the period, the magazine-style programme.[8]

Just as importantly, Bourdieusian thought also enables the history of the BBC to be visualized as a link in a chain of cause and effect. Most academic studies of the BBC hitherto have analysed it as a distinct institution with its own unique culture and character, overwhelmingly if not solely determined by John Reith. In contrast, this thesis moves beyond

[8] Keith Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society, The Experience of the British System since 1911* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1979), Chapter Eight.

the traditional interpretations and conclusions, presenting the BBC's substantive nature as being determined by wider forces of social facts and social changes and continuities. Bourdieu's theories of the field, capital and the doxa offer a convincing explanation of how changes occur and how continuities hold sway in societies such as inter-war Britain. The dominant class social actors in fields where that class was made up almost totally by Britain's public school and 'Varsity class – the so-called "educated" class of "gentlemen" – colonized positions of power, authority and influence through processes of both inclusion of the fitted and the exclusion of the ill-fitted. The BBC may be said to present a classic example of Bourdieusian thinking played out in social reality. We have seen very clearly and in detail in the previous chapters how deeply colonized the BBC was with products of the elite educational institutions and how Reith made this happen through his own elitist convictions. But crucially, it has also been made clear that his strategy was not a Reithian invention but one attuned to essential and basic facts of British institutional life. With so few British young people experiencing any form of secondary education after the Great War, the available pool of potential employees was automatically limited. The theoretical supply of available talent was diminished too by the loss of so many dominant class men between the ages of 18 and 35 between 1914 and 1918. The major British institutions were managed overwhelmingly by products of the public schools, an employment culture of which Reith would have known every well. So, as was revealed and explicated in chapter one, in the quest for the building of a "first class" broadcasting organisation offering "the best" the country could produce, it was rather orthodox thinking on Reith's part to construct a simple system of recruitment based on sharply defined selection criteria. What is distinctive about Reithianism, however, is that his system was so systematic and so rigid. The extension of his strategy and tactics for making the BBC a "great" institution was, as we have also seen, extended to sports mediators. Despite more lower-class individuals being brought to the microphone in the 1930s (as has

just been described above), the Reithian System did not undergo an ideological shift, rather the slight adjustments. This was most likely brought about either as a result of Reith inserting a safety valve in his system to release social tension or a less clearly defined feeling of the need to bow to growing populist pressure.

It has been explained that the BBC had many critics, especially in the press, constantly urging Reith and his BBC to move in a populist direction. Here Bourdieusian theory is again extremely helpful. His theoretical construction of the field contained the idea, based on empirical observation, that fields were sites of struggle between the dominant and the dominated and that as a result, change could occur. This thinking is perfectly illustrated by the concessions Reith and his production staff made to pressure from below in the 1930s, bringing in new sports for transmission and, so a limited extent, lower-class individuals – all male – to present them to the listeners (see Chapter Four). Change did not, however, extend to departing very far from societal norms regarding race and gender. This was certainly the case regarding employment practices where the cause of female emancipation was only lightly served by the employment of Matheson, Adams, Somerville, and Benzie. Assessments of the significance of their careers partly depend upon the expectations of change on the part of the observer. The instituting of a marriage bar in 1932 supports the hypothesis that women were among the casualties of Reith's rightward drift from early in the decade. But dominant class individuals such as Marjorie Pollard (cricket and hockey) and Eleanor Helme (golf) were allowed to develop roles as reporters and women tended to predominate at the microphone in items on camping. This thesis extends Murphy's work to a study of sports mediators and shows that the use of female reporters and commentators was definitively a part of Reithian notions of class and broadcaster suitability. This study of sports mediators,

however, found that if BBC fields were sites of struggle for women in the fact of patriarchal power, in terms of race they were simply sites of exclusion.

These findings on class and the BBC are also important in enabling light to be reflected back onto inter-war British society. Reith's work in building a national broadcasting institution was so successful that both the number of wireless license holders and *Radio Times* purchasers numbered millions by 1930. By then the organisation had also won the approval of opinion formers and other members of the establishment. As Muggeridge's quote shows at the head of this chapter, by 1939 it had become a British institution of enormous weight and influence the wireless set having become an everyday object in all but the poorest homes in the country. Thus by the beginning of World War Two this media organism's status had reached such an exalted level that any study of British society between 1919 and 1939 should of necessity include a study of the British Broadcasting Corporation. The vast importance of sport in society during this period, with its huge growth in the number of active participants and players year on year reinforces the argument that any competent, serious of study of BBC radio sport should have a respectable level of importance accorded to it. The finding that the BBC and its sports products were class-derived social products, emanating from the creation of a field where a dominant class of ex-public school and ancient university scholars operated a premediated system of radio content production is hugely significant in increasing our understanding of the institution. Its significance also lies in the argument that BBC radio sport as a social product should be recognised as a formidable bulwark of bourgeois power. This takes on further significance in the light of historians so frequently depicting the struggle for power between social classes as being a key feature of the inter-war period.

So the revelation of a structured Reithian system of recruitment based on an elitist ideology is an extremely important finding. What this and other thesis findings may be allowed to argue is that when historians cite examples of the politics of the BBC during the inter-war period, they include not just its role during the General Strike, the Abdication Crisis and the period of appeasement but the creation of a Reithian recruitment system, a feature of which was the selection of sports mediators, also. This continued throughout the inter-war years and Chapter Four reveals the way his ideological position of the very early years of the BBC where speakers should be of "educational and social standing" did not change in the latter part of Reith's management.

Thus far, scholars have yet to accord anything like this measure of significance to BBC radio sport. There is an insufficiency of scholarship thus far on the subject that this thesis directly addresses. It takes research on the BBC beyond the existing historiographical terrain to examine the way in which Reith sought to impose his own assumptions about class and society upon the national, regional and local audiences. Through the application of Bourdieusian theory to the fields of BBC recruitment – generally and in sports production - a much more profound understanding of Reithianism in theory and practice is finally possible.

Thus, this thesis is highly important in offering a hitherto unavailable conception of the BBC itself and of the nature of its radio sport products – output and mediators of that output – in this designated period. Methodologically, it argues for the value of a multi-disciplinary approach to historical objects of scrutiny, the effectiveness of the incorporation of sociological thinking into the study of history and in the case of a single institution, here the BBC, the usefulness of focusing on single types of output to widen our understanding of the object in question. It also highlights the efficacy of the case study as a tool of analysis and

argues for the subject of sport to be taken more seriously than is usually the case in studies of twentieth century history.

The Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the research study most obviously number two. Firstly, to apply only the sociological theory of one single sociological narrows its focus. Not comparing the efficacy of his thought to the object with another school of thought would be a valid criticism. Examining the very different sociological ideas, methods and conceptions of structural-functionalism, for example, would have produced interesting results no doubt, not least in thoroughly testing the strength of Bourdieusian thought. A second limitation, far less self-imposed, derives from the limitations of the sources. An investigation intent on uncovering the personal attitudes to any issue is dependent upon those individuals deliberately, accidentally or unconsciously disclosing them in some form of historical documentation. In this particular study, researching source material at the BBC Written Archive Centre was hampered by dominant class reluctance to disclose their habitus in terms of attitudes to their own class attachment, with its perks, perquisites and privileges extracted from the game in that particular field, or to the classes their class dominated. Indeed, a part of dominant class habitus was a belief in the unseemliness of public comment on class. As this thesis has related, many contemporaries testified to the profound class-orientation of British society in the 1920s and 1930s. Given the class-bound nature of Reithian aims and objectives at the BBC, traces of class attitudes among members of staff – prejudices or lack thereof –might have been expected. In the event, however, the search for documentary comments on the issue of social class was largely unproductive. Thus, the nature of much of the evidence that might answer the question, "To what extent was structural Reithian staff and mediator exclusionism based on class prejudice, elitism and snobbery?" was for the most part purely

circumstantial. Thus because the research project found only a small number of sources which clearly evidenced opinions and attitudes of staff to class, the question could only be answered tentatively. However, the problems have been partly overcome by bringing together a wide range of primary sources to aid historical analysis and scrutinising them for trace elements of the habitus of the BBC's socially elevated staff regarding social class. If the number of documents revealing dominant class superiority to classes normatively depicted as resting below them in a hierarchical configuration was few, evidence of BBC staff egalitarianism was completely absent. This is hugely significant.

Other limitations are inimical to this type of research study. Necessarily, an investigation into social class relations and the BBC are almost inevitably constrained by the need to work within a specific time period and within a specific area of the BBC's work caused simply by time constraints and institutional thesis extent boundaries. However, time limitations can be a boon. However, time limitations can be a boon. By examining a specific chronological period it is possible to discern lasting patterns of development. Cognizance of early BBC history – from its nascence in the emergence of broadcasting through to the Phoney War - is absolutely crucial in the search for meaning for its mid- and later-twentieth century incarnation. The creation of "BBC English" provides an outstanding example, as does Reith's staffer recruitment strategy and its extension into output mediators.[9] Both class-bound objects proved to be extremely durable. In terms of sports mediation, in sports such as cricket, rugby union, Association football, golf, athletics and equestrianism, the connection between elite educational institutions and suitability to commentate remained very largely unbroken. The

[9] See for example, David Frost, *An Autobiography - Part One, From Congregations to Audiences* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), 33; Dick Booth, *Talking of Sport*: *The Story of Broadcasting* (Cheltenham: Sports Books, 2008); Barry Davies, *Interesting, Very Interesting* (London: Hodder Headline, 2007), 19; Brian Moore, *Brian Moore: The Final Score* (London: Hodder, 1999), 34.

same can be said for the Corporation's deep symbiotic relationship with Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Looking forward

This study sub-textually suggests that other researchers, particularly historians, would make interesting discoveries by firstly, incorporating sociological theory into their methodology secondly, for scholars of the BBC to use class as a tool of analysis. Obviously, this study focuses on just one part of the organisation's history; the way is therefore open for research using these conceptual and methodological frameworks to be extended to the wartime and post-war periods, travelling forward in time to the present. Where sports mediators has been the subject of investigation, the research area may profitably be extended to sports programming choices or, indeed, programming choices in other output areas. Equally obviously, wider class studies of BBC mediators would build on or perhaps challenge the findings presented here. Going further, studies of other institutions deploying the type of methodology used in this project would be most interesting and would complement the work carried out here. Finally, where this study has investigated inter-war BBC radio, the same type of study of BBC television represents an obvious additional line of inquiry.

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